Commentary

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Norman Podhoretz

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The Androgyny Party
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Christians and the Holy Land
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The Independent Counsel: An Exchange
Robert H. Bork and Critics

Books in Review: George Weigel / Morris Freedman / Bret Stephens / David Singer /Christopher Caldwell

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Commentary®

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The Independent Counsel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The article by Robert H. Bork, "Against the Independent Counsel" [February], is remarkable for its lack of objectivity and its intolerance. According to Judge Bork, the "horrors of the institution could have been predicted," the record under the independent-counsel statute has been "abominable," and it has produced "savage injustice" to individuals.

Not content with arguing his point philosophically or legally, he himself takes savage and unjust swipes at the independent counsel in the Iran-*contra* affair, Judge Lawrence Walsh, and his staff, accusing them of lying to the Court, and characterizing Judge Walsh's record as being from "poor to disastrous." He follows this scurrilous attack by criticizing seven Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States for being so inept as to uphold the constitutionality of the independent-counsel statute, and by condemning the jury system.

Judge Bork opines, with no basis in fact, that the job of independent counsel "offers the chance to become a national figure, but only if scalps are taken." It is ludicrous for anyone to suggest that Judge Walsh longed to become a "national figure." He already was a national figure. Seventy-four years of age when he accepted this difficult assignment, he was a former United States District Court Judge, a past president of the American Bar Association, Deputy Attorney General during the Eisenhower administration, and later a senior partner in the firm of Davis, Polk & Wardwell.

None of the other independent counsels has become a "national figure," or ever aspired to become one. There have been thirteen independent counsels appointed since the statute was enacted in 1978. Indictments were brought by only four of them. No scalps were sought or taken by the other nine. (Allow me to state my own experience: I was appointed as independent counsel to investigate possible law violations by then-Assistant Attorney General Theodore Olson in 1986, but resigned after a short time because of an apparent conflict of interest. In 1987, I was appointed as independent counsel to investigate possible law violations by Lyn Nofziger, and my mandate was later expanded to include then-Attorney General Edwin Meese 3rd.)

Judge Walsh's investigations were confounded and substantially handicapped by the grants of immunity by Congress and by the refusal of the Department of Justice to cooperate in important respects. Those unprecedented complications added enormously to the expenses of the investigations. Despite those serious obstructions, Judge Walsh obtained convictions of eleven defendants. Two of them (North and Poindexter) were found guilty by juries of multiple felony counts, and final convictions were avoided only because of the immunity grants. The four counts against Joseph F. Fernandez were dismissed because Attorney General Thornburgh, another bitter foe of the independent-counsel statute, blocked the disclosure of classified information relative to the defense.

Judge Bork wallows in sympathy for Elliott Abrams, accusing Judge Walsh and his staff, again with no factual support, of "taking an interest" in Abrams only because of the dismissal of the *North* case and the predicted dismissal of the *Poindexter* case. It is Judge Bork's belief that Judge Walsh and his staff "went after Abrams because they badly needed trophies."

Judge Bork then minimizes the offenses to which Abrams pled guilty, and refers to Jeffrey Toobin's book, which, according to Judge Bork, disclosed "the team's eagerness to prosecute Abrams and their disappointment that they had not found sufficient evidence."

Judge Bork's sympathy for Abrams might have receded, if not disappeared, had he read everything Toobin said about him. Toobin branded Abrams's answers to questions by Senator John Kerry as reeking with falsehood. A later statement by Abrams to Lee Hamilton, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, is characterized by Toobin as being a "whopper." Still another answer to a question from Senator Bradley was, according to Toobin, "a flat-out, bald-faced lie." Abrams, after thinking that one over for ten

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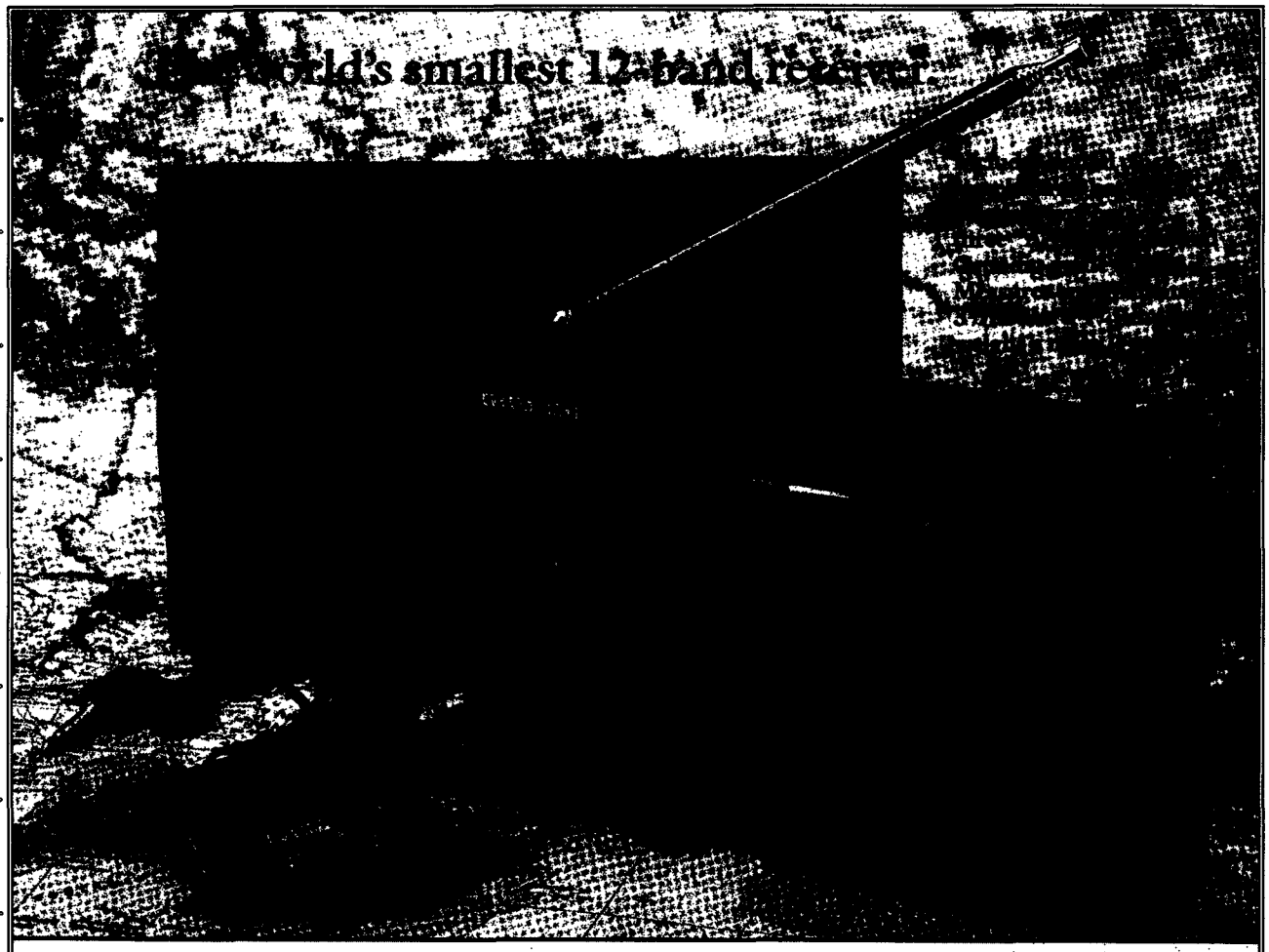

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days, recanted his false testimony.

In justifying Abrams's decision to plead guilty to two misdemeanor charges of withholding evidence from Congress, Judge Bork condemns the jury system by asserting in effect that no jury trying Abrams would decide the charges based on the evidence, and refers to a purported statement by Judge Learned Hand who, according to Judge Bork, "once said that above all things, he would dread having his fate in the hands of a jury." We are not told the context in which Judge Hand is supposed to have made that alleged comment, and the truth is, it pertained to his dread of being involved in litigation, and was not meant to be an attack on the jury system. But, in any event, it is rather amazing that a constitutional expert, a former Federal Circuit Court Judge, and an appointee to a position on the Supreme Court of the United States would subscribe to that strange thesis.

Judge Bork asserts that the statute ensures that independent counsel will bring prosecutions that no regular prosecutor would bring, and that never should be brought. That remarkable statement is a sweeping denigration of all past and future independent counsels, and ignores the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of prosecutions each year that end in dismissals or jury verdicts, and also overlooks that fact that only four of thirteen independent counsels brought prosecutions. And it is pertinent to point out that, whereas, in the second Meese investigation, I declined to prosecute the Attorney General, the Deputy Attorney General and the Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Criminal Division resigned, and angrily denounced my decision, asserting publicly and before Congress that they would have prosecuted their boss, a sitting Attorney General of the United States.

Judge Bork conveniently overlooks the fact that an independent counsel cannot be appointed except upon application by the Attorney General. It is worth noting also that Meese himself requested the appointment of an independent counsel prior to my investigation. And to say that an independent counsel is not accountable to anyone and is free of supervision simply defies reality. No one is any more open to public view than an independent counsel charged with investigating a high-level member of the executive branch. He or she operates in a glass bowl; every move is scrutinized, analyzed, and frequently criticized by Congress and the media. Moreover, an independent counsel can be removed for cause by the Attorney General, is subject to biannual audits by the Government Accounting Office, and is required to follow the guidelines laid down by the Department of Justice.

Judge Bork also asserts that no "regular prosecutor" would make public his or her reasons for not indicting. The fact is that the statute *required* an independent counsel to state the reasons for not prosecuting matters within his or her jurisdiction. However, the independent counsel did not have the power to release the report to the public. Only the Court had that power. And the Court had the additional power to make such orders as were appropriate to protect the rights of any individuals named in the report. If any person named in the report believed that its public release would be inappropriate or prejudicial, he or she had the right to file a motion seeking to have all or any portion withheld from the public.

The most insupportable episode in the history of the independent-counsel statute was the Christmas Eve pardons issued by President Bush. Both President Bush and Judge Bork referred to the felonies allegedly perpetrated by Caspar Weinberger and Duane Clarridge, and the crimes of which the other four pardoned defendants were convicted, as expressions of "policy differences." President Bush went even further, and emphasized that the single common denominator for the motivation of those individuals was "patriotism." Since when, one could fairly ask, do perjury before Congress, false statements to Congress, and withholding information from Congress become mere expressions of policy differences? When was it ever considered "patriotic" to defy the laws of Congress, and lie about it in the process?

No court has ever come close to saying that conduct such as that engaged in by those individuals reflected only policy differences. If they had such differences with Congress, they could have loudly proclaimed them, or sought to change the laws with which they disagreed. But they could not lie to, or withhold information from, Congress.

Judge Gerhard A. Gesell answered forcefully the grotesque assertion that a high-level official of the government, or anyone, can be excused from lying to Congress based on the assertion of a difference in policy beliefs:

> It is essential that Congress legislate based on fact, not falsification, in the realm of foreign affairs as well as in domestic legislation. If Congress is increasing its power in a manner that infringes upon the President's prerogatives, the President may assert executive privilege or direct (his subordinates) not to answer. . . . The thought that any one of the hundreds of thousands of persons working for the President can affirmatively and intentionally mislead Congress when it seeks information to perform one of its assigned functions for any reason . . . is unacceptable on its face. Such a disdainful view of our democratic form of government has no constitutional substance.

I believe the independent-counsel statute served a useful purpose, and that the system, which eliminated institutional conflicts of interest, was not abused. Most of the independent-counsel investigations resulted in decisions not to prosecute. The public accepted those decisions because they were made by an independent entity. The refusals to prosecute would not have been so readily accepted had the decisions been made by the Department of Justice.

There is no doubt that the independent-counsel statute could be improved, and it is to be hoped that objective and rational views can be brought to bear on legitimate issues when the legislation is again before Congress. However, so long as the opponents of the statute wear blinders and rely on mean-spirited arguments, there is little chance that those issues will be seriously debated.

James C. McKay
Washington, D.C.

To the Editor of Commentary:

Robert H. Bork continues to be delightfully provocative in his article opposing the independent counsel. However, the article is partisan and slipshod, and does not represent Judge Bork at his best.

With one curt sentence only,

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characterizing as "unpersuasive" the Supreme Court's seven-to-one decision upholding the enabling statute as constitutional, Judge Bork dismisses the Court's opinion authored by the Chief Justice. Judge Bork declines to discuss the obstacles faced by independent-counsel Walsh in the prosecutions of Oliver North and John Poindexter—problems caused by congressionally immunized testimony, which the U.S. Court of Appeals held tainted the trial testimony against both men. Judge Bork makes no reference to the prosecution of Joseph Fernandez, which was effectively blocked in 1989 by Attorney General Thornburgh, who prohibited the use at trial of publicly known information, on the pretext that such information could not be declassified. Finally, Judge Bork brushes aside the convictions after trial of Thomas Clines and Clair George; and the numerous negotiated pleas of guilty by major players, such as Alan Fiers, Richard Secord, Albert Hakim, Robert McFarlane, Carl Channell, and Richard Miller. Little recognition is given to the indictments of Caspar Weinberger (former Secretary of Defense) and Duane Clarridge, whose pending trials were aborted by President Bush's pardons.

In 1978, Congress authorized the appointment of an independent counsel to investigate and prosecute, if warranted, high government officials in the executive branch. The appointment of independent counsel was to be made by the U.S. Court of Appeals, in Washington, on application of the Attorney General. The Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the statute and its mechanism for the appointment of the independent counsel. In a strong opinion by Chief Justice Rehnquist, with only Justice Scalia in dissent, the Court discounted the many arguments of invalidity now advanced by Judge Bork, whose article merely tracks the solitary dissent of Justice Scalia. Judge Bork's criticism that the Court "weakened the presidency" is ironic, for Chief Justice Rehnquist is a forceful spokesman for a strong executive. . . .

In cynical fashion, Judge Bork would have us believe that each independent counsel has "a chance to become a national figure." . . . Judge Bork just does not remember that some distinguished attorneys, like himself, respond to the call of public service. It really is in poor taste for him to question the public service of others when he himself rendered significant public service for years (and was prepared, in 1987, to continue public service indefinitely until the Senate denied him confirmation to the Supreme Court).

Citing Teapot Dome and Watergate, the U.S. Court of Appeals (in *In Re Olson*) noted that

> the need for a special counsel who is to some extent independent of the Justice Department and free of the conflicts of interest that exist when an administration investigates the alleged wrongdoing of its own high officials *has been demonstrated* several times this century.

In 1984, Congress enacted the Boland Amendment prohibiting intelligence agencies from providing military support to the rebel *contras* attempting to overthrow the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. In November 1986, after news reports revealed a clandestine shipment of arms to Iran, Attorney General Meese reviewed National Security Council activities with respect to Iran, and learned that monies paid by representatives of Iran for American arms had been illegally deposited into bank accounts controlled by the *contras*. The Attorney General applied for the appointment of an independent counsel, and the Court appointed Judge Lawrence Walsh. During this period, Congress commenced a broad investigation into the Iran-*contra* affair. Congress exercised its power to grant immunity to numerous witnesses, including the soon-to-be-famous Oliver North (National Security Council staff member) and John Poindexter (National Security Adviser). Public interest in the lengthy televised congressional hearings was intense. Oliver North, his counsel Brendan Sullivan, and his secretary Fawn Hall, became instant folk heroes. The cloak-and-dagger operations of the CIA proved fascinating. North—always the colonel—raised the Nuremberg defense. He candidly admitted his involvement, claiming he was "merely following orders." The public received an education in clandestine Middle East diplomacy. Obviously, the crucial question became who in the National Security Council or the White House was issuing the orders. Congress never did learn the full picture. The presidential pardons quashed Walsh's efforts just as he was pressing closer to the White House.

North, Poindexter, Secord, and Hakim were jointly indicted. The indictment included charges of conspiring to violate the Boland Amendment and other laws, and also to participate in a cover-up by lying to and withholding information from Congress and other federal investigators. At the separate North and Poindexter trials, Walsh limited his evidentiary presentations to avoid problems caused by the prior congressionally immunized testimony of North and Poindexter. A jury convicted North of altering and destroying documents, and aiding and abetting in the obstruction of Congress. Another jury convicted Poindexter of obstruction of Congress, false statements, and conspiracy to obstruct official inquiries.

The U.S. Court of Appeals reversed the conviction of North, and remanded the proceedings to the trial court to determine whether the immunized congressional testimony had tainted the trial testimony. Subsequently Walsh conceded he could not meet the stringent test of the Court of Appeals, and did not oppose North's application to dismiss the indictment.

A different panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals reversed the conviction of Poindexter on the very same ground and dismissed the indictment.

In chastising Walsh for having lost the North and Poindexter prosecutions, Judge Bork makes no reference to the problems caused by the congressionally immunized testimony. He refers to Walsh's record as "poor to disastrous." He would have us believe that Walsh's prosecution of those who gave perjured testimony to Congress to cover up illegal acts was "criminalizing political differences," even though many of them pleaded guilty. Congress has the right to expect truthful testimony from high government officials as to their compliance with the laws enacted by Congress.

I do not suggest that there cannot be legitimate objections to the Office of Independent Counsel. I do suggest that Judge Bork has not substantially contributed to the debate. He has not been careful or accurate in his recitation of past events.

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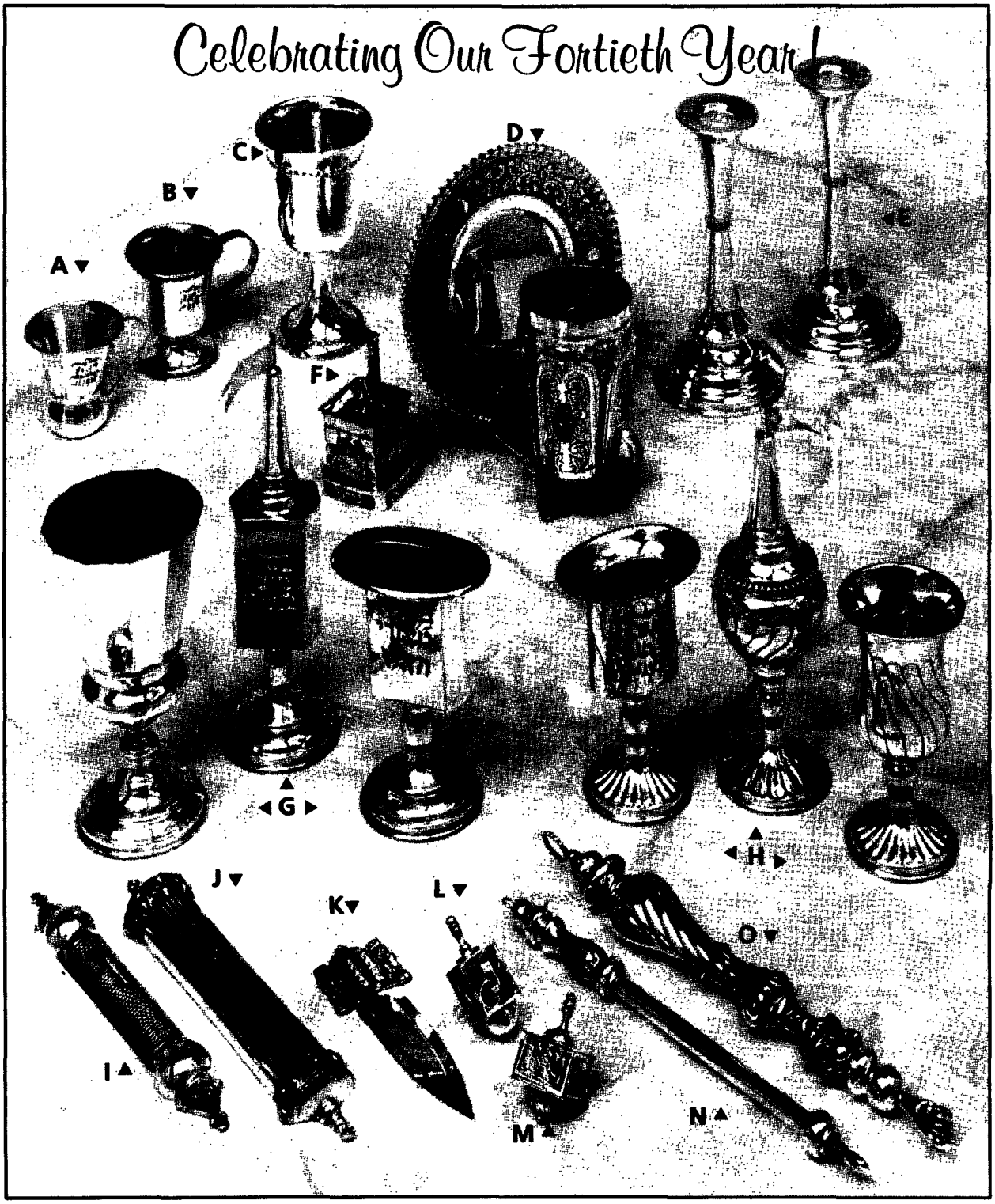

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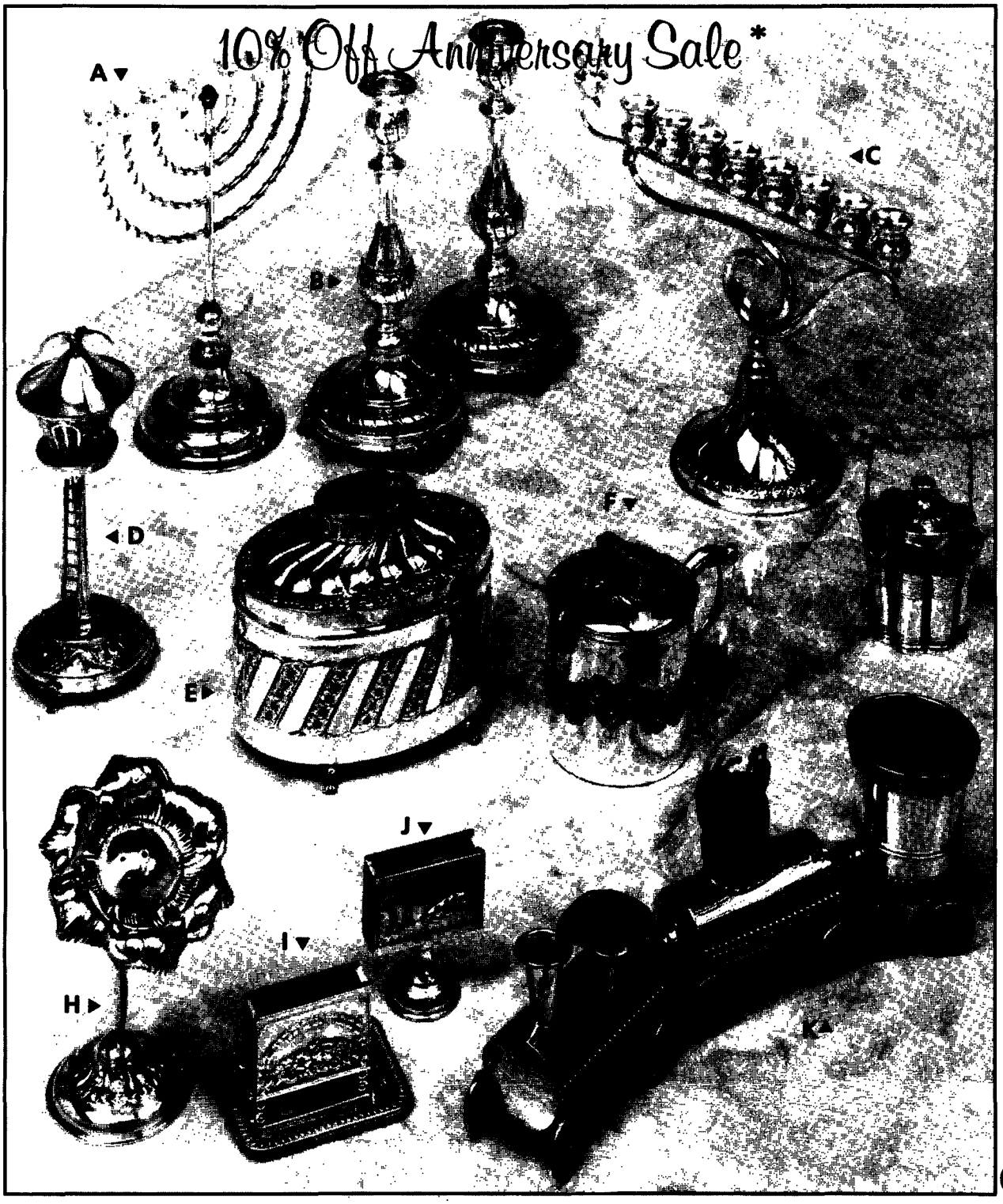

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Legislation extending the Office of Independent Counsel is now pending and is expected to be enacted. Legitimate proposals to limit the office have been voiced, including limitations upon the tenure of the office. There is also concern about the requirement that independent counsel file a written report with Congress on his activities; this concern focuses on the reporting of unsubstantiated allegations of wrongdoing by unindicted persons.

The comments of Judge Bork are so partisan and misleading that they will have little impact. Judge Bork's article did a disservice, not only to the readers of COMMENTARY, but also to those who have reasonable doubts as to the wisdom of continuing the office.

ELLIOT WALES

New York City

ROBERT H. BORK writes:

Neither James C. McKay nor Elliot Wales chooses to discuss the main theses of my article: (1) that there is no need for an independent-counsel statute because historic procedures have always proved entirely adequate to deal with executive-branch wrongdoing; and (2) that the law has been used by Congress to participate in law enforcement, which the Constitution lodges in the President, in order to assail the moral legitimacy and the effectiveness of the presidency. Instead, they offer a series of misrepresentations of the article and the facts, reinforced by heavy-breathing invective.

What exercises these gentlemen most is my criticism of the Office of the Independent Counsel (OIC) headed by Lawrence Walsh. Such criticism as I offered was mild compared to what might have been said, so it is to be feared that Messrs. McKay and Wales will like this reply even less.

I have always liked Lawrence Walsh. When I was a third-year law student, he made the first job offer I had ever received. Though much impressed by him, I declined because the job involved the regulation of public utilities in New York, not a terribly romantic beginning to a legal career. When one of the judges on the panel that appointed Walsh to the OIC remarked to me that he had the ideal résumé and temperament for the job, I agreed completely and even enthusiastically. But the performance of his office, sad to say, decisively refutes that assessment. It is, of course, possible that Walsh is not directly responsible for much of what has been done (he has said he rarely makes a recommendation anymore), but the record of the Iran-*contra* investigations is a decisive reason for not reenacting the independent-counsel law.

Consider the record. Iran-*contra* was supposedly about massive executive-branch criminality. Not one charge of illegal acts in violation of congressional restrictions reached trial. Most of the substantive offenses charged involved trivia—e.g., Oliver North accepting the gift of a security fence for his home—or were derivative offenses allegedly committed in the course of various investigations. From the beginning, Walsh has denounced a massive conspiracy to cover up illegal behavior. Yet he has uncovered no such conspiracy and the evidence indicates that none exists. What the OIC has done instead is indict people for what they said or did not say in congressional hearings or to the OIC's investigators. Lacking any case about Iran-*contra* itself, this pursuit of those who misspoke is said to be justified in order to establish the principle that executive-branch officials must not lie to Congress. But that principle has little or no relation to many of the cases that were brought and certainly does not justify the shabby persecutions of individuals.

First, the matter of Elliott Abrams. Contrary to Mr. McKay, I have read everything Jeffrey Toobin said about Abrams, and a singularly unedifying experience it was. After noting that he was no Republican, Toobin wrote:

> I undertook the investigation of Abrams with an enthusiasm that bordered on the unseemly. The prosecution of Abrams would serve as a warning to all those who thought they could dispense truth like charity favored on a chosen few. Getting the bad guys—this was what being a prosecutor was all about.

Toobin knew that Abrams was a "bad guy" before he had collected and analyzed the evidence, presumably because Abrams had implemented Reagan's policy of supporting the *contras*. (That is one trouble with independent counsels, or indeed any special prosecutors: they attract staff that is politically motivated to "get" people whose politics they detest.) But even Toobin concluded Abrams had broken no law. Discussing the distinction between doing something wrong and committing a crime, Toobin wrote: "Elliott Abrams's dissembling before Congress well earned him derision and contempt. But not jail."

The OIC never charged or could have charged that Elliott Abrams engaged in illegal actions, knew of any, or attempted to conceal illegal actions from Congress. But Walsh and his deputy, Craig Gillen, thought Abrams should have, if not jail time, the blot of a criminal conviction on his record. The charges, of not being sufficiently forthcoming in two unsworn appearances before congressional committees, were the same ones Toobin found insufficient, but by Walsh's own statement, the task was to "get" Abrams. By unremitting pressure, threats of a multi-count indictment and financial ruin, the OIC finally coerced the plea they wanted. As explained in my article, the charges to which Abrams pled involved an arguable overstatement of the truth and a truth that was misleading and which Abrams corrected shortly afterward. This is a remarkable record for a man who testified on these subjects, without counsel, over twenty times before hostile congressional committees, had scores of meetings with individual Congressmen, and was repeatedly questioned by members of the OIC, both in their offices and before a grand jury.

Toobin had two things wrong: there was no "dissembling," and Abrams's performance has earned him "contempt and derision" only from fanatical political enemies; to others, myself included, he remains an example of integrity and courage under great pressure. Few things in his presidency became George Bush as well as the pardons he extended to Abrams and others.

BUT Elliott Abrams's ordeal is far from the only episode that condemns the Iran-*contra* OIC's performance. Prosecutors are not supposed to try defendants in the press, and the first generation of independent counsels was careful to avoid press contact. Not so this independent counsel. Michael Ledeen, writing in the *American Spectator*, notes that Walsh

> had so much direct contact with the press that one finds, on perusal of

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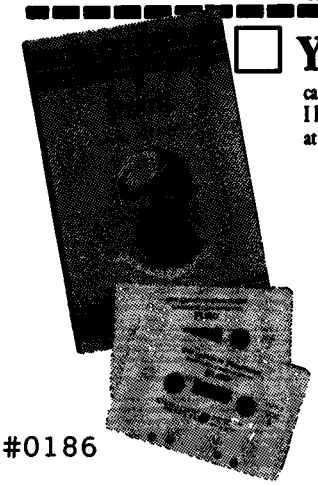

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his media calendar, that he would often process journalists like so many widgets on an assembly line, bringing in a new one every 45 minutes for hours on end.

Terrence O'Donnell, who participated in the defense of Oliver North, testified to a congressional committee that at the high point, Walsh had three full-time press aides who "helped to shape the story and engaged in 'spin control' in the courthouse halls during trial as if it were some sort of political contest."

The OIC over time employed more than 70 lawyers (a total of 40 lawyers eventually signed pleadings in North's case alone) in 6 offices around the country, and over 50 FBI, IRS, and Customs Agents were sent around the globe to gather evidence. These people were used in a pursuit of prey that was fanatical to the point of absurdity. O'Donnell recounts that in the OIC's unsuccessful effort to find that North profited from his actions in Iran-*contra*, North's wife was called before the grand jury, her sister was questioned about the cost of feeding their daughter's horse, their babysitter and the teenager who mowed their lawn were questioned about how much they were paid, and their minister was asked how much the Norths contributed on Sunday.

And what was the lying that North was charged with? Not, as most people suppose, with lying under oath to Congress, but with lying at a meeting where he was not under oath and of which there was no transcript. (Two of Walsh's other triumphs consisted of getting guilty pleas from two individuals on a tax-law theory that the head of the Department of Justice's Tax Division thought highly dubious and would not have prosecuted under.)

The OIC's second indictment of Caspar Weinberger, filed on the eve of the 1992 election with the wholly gratuitous suggestion that George Bush was covering up knowledge of Iran-*contra*, is only one of the outrages committed in the hounding of Weinberger. Ledeen relates a particularly instructive one. General John Vessey, the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, once told Weinberger that he had heard that the Saudis were giving money to the *contras*. Shortly thereafter, Weinberger mentioned this to John McMahon, the deputy director of Central Intelligence, and McMahon included it in his memorandum of this meeting. Testifying to a congressional committee two years later, Weinberger did not recall having any knowledge of Saudi payments. The congressional committees investigating this matter later showed Weinberger a copy of McMahon's memorandum. Weinberger said the memorandum did not "refresh his memory," he still did not remember having heard about the Saudi funding, but if McMahon said it was so, it must have been so. The independent counsel indicted Weinberger for "making false statements to Congress."

If these are not examples of an office out for scalps, of prosecutors out of control, it is hard to know what evidence would satisfy Messrs. McKay and Wales. McKay finds solace in the fact that only four of thirteen independent counsels have brought indictments. I don't know why. As Theodore Olson's travails show, it is possible to punish by a three-year investigation of baseless charges. As will be discussed, it was possible to punish Edwin Meese in the independent counsel's final report without indicting him. Moreover, the fact that some investigations proved fruitless and many independent counsels proved fair does not remove the fact that the statute creates perverse incentives for prosecutors and allows them to overwhelm their victims.

But not all OICs prove fair or drop baseless charges. Having failed to prove illegal acts, the Iran-*contra* prosecutors have settled for the most dubious, in some cases ridiculous, attempts to get convictions or pleas for things said or not said. Yes, I do call what was done to Weinberger, Abrams, and others "savage injustices." And at what cost in addition to human suffering and the deformation of our criminal-justice system? It is commonly said that Walsh has expended $35 million in these pursuits, but O'Donnell estimates that when other costs are counted, such as those for the investigating agents and of compliance by government agencies with the OIC's massive subpoenas and document requests, the total is probably closer to $100 million.

In defending Walsh, Messrs. McKay and Wales are not loath to suggest illegal acts by others, without any evidence whatever. Both refer to the dismissal of the charges against Joseph F. Fernandez because the government would not disclose classified information. Mr. McKay implies that this was dishonest: it was done by "Attorney General Thornburgh, another bitter foe of the independent-counsel statute"; Mr. Wales says it directly: Thornburgh "prohibited the use at trial of publicly known information, on the pretext that such information could not be declassified." If the information had been publicly known, Thornburgh's refusal to declassify it would have been futile. Richard Thornburgh is an honorable man, and those who suggest otherwise should have at least one fact to support a slur.

In noting that the independent-counsel position offers the chance to become a national figure, but only if scalps are taken, I was not speaking of Walsh but of the incentives built into the statute. Nevertheless, both Messrs. McKay and Wales choose to misread the piece and offer a spirited argument that Walsh already was a national figure and so could have had no such incentive to take the job. I have no idea why Walsh accepted the position and will not try to guess. For the benefit of Messrs. McKay and Wales, however, it should be said that Walsh was a national figure only among lawyers, and many other independent counsels were not even that. The insidious effects of the system probably operate most strongly on the deputies and legal staffs of the independent counsel. For them, a high-profile indictment and trial is viewed as a career-making step. There is no satisfaction in leaving a law firm to come to Washington and, after months or years of arduous labor, writing a report explaining why no indictment was brought. This probably explains why the staff often seems more eager to prosecute than the independent counsel.

BUT perhaps the most damning aspect of the Iran-*contra* investigations, recounted by persons interrogated by the OIC, is that this office investigated the possibility that at least one target and one potential witness had had extramarital affairs. What conceivable relevance could that information have? What could have been the purpose of such inquiries? It would be helpful if Mr. McKay, Mr. Wales, or other defenders of the Walsh operation could think of a reason

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other than using the threat of scandal to coerce guilty pleas or testimony—tactics that might be regarded in impolite circles as blackmail. Perhaps Walsh did not know of these investigations into sex; it would be good to think so, but his office is responsible for them.

When Bush pardoned Weinberger, Abrams, and four other officials, Walsh went ballistic. He referred to what he called Bush's "own misconduct." He asserted that Weinberger was guilty. When Weinberger said that Walsh had abused his powers, Walsh proved the point by saying on television that Weinberger "lied just as readily to the media as he lied to Congress. He's making it quite clear that his first line of defense when he has a troublesome problem is to lie." So much for Weinberger's long and distinguished career of public service. So much for prosecutorial responsibility.

Mr. McKay accuses me of "a sweeping denigration of all past and future independent counsels." He reads too hastily. The article expressly stated that "[s]ome independent counsels have performed their tasks admirably." One of these was Jacob Stein who, quite correctly, refused to indict Edwin Meese. Had Stein allowed the staff to discuss what they regarded as Meese's administrative deficiencies in the final report, it is quite possible Meese would not have been confirmed as Attorney General. But Stein did not. His task was solely to discover whether the criminal law had been violated. He was aware of the dangers in the almost unlimited powers of the independent counsel and remarked that, given the office's unlimited staff and budget, "you can overpower anyone. . . . Nobody can compete with you, especially an individual."

But an independent counsel has powers other than the power to indict or to coerce pleas. One of them is the power to smear by his final report. Mr. McKay, like Stein, investigated Edwin Meese and declined to prosecute him. (Mr. McKay's memory fails him here. The Deputy Attorney General and Assistant Attorney General to whom he refers resigned before Mr. McKay announced his decision and hence did not "angrily denounce" it. The AAG said later that he would have indicted but that reasonable men could differ.)

When leaks and rumors about the investigation of Meese bade

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Should we re-examine endlessly repeated platitudes?

In a previous installment in this series of clarifying messages about Israel and the Middle East, we examined certain myths which, by dint of constant repetition, had acquired currency and acceptance. We looked at the myth of "Palestinian nationhood", the myth of the Gaza Strip and Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") being "occupied territory", the myth that Jewish settlements in these territories are "the greatest obstacle to peace", and the myth that Israel is unwilling to "yield land for peace". And we cleared up the greatest myth of all, namely that Israel's administration of the territories and not Arab determination to destroy the state, is the root cause of the conflict between the Arabs and Israel. But these are not all the myths; there are more.

What are some of these myths?

Myth: The Arabs of Israel are a persecuted minority without civil and political rights. **Reality:** The 700,000 non-Jews (mostly Arabs) who are citizens of Israel have the same civil rights that Jews have. They vote, are members of the Knesset (parliament), and are part of Israel's civil and diplomatic services. Arabs have full access to the Israeli legal, health and educational systems, including Arabic and Moslem universities. The only difference between the "rights" of Arabs and Jews is that the Jews must serve three years in the military and at least one month a year until age 50. The Arabs have no such obligation. For them, military service is voluntary, but very few avail themselves of the privilege. **Myth:** Israel should give up Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") because strategic depth is meaningless in this age of missiles. **Reality:** Israel is a mini-state—about half the size of San Bernardino county in California. If another, even smaller mini-state were carved out of it, Israel would be totally indefensible. That is the opinion of 100 retired U.S. generals and admirals as conveyed to the President of the U.S. If the Arabs were to occupy whatever little strategic depths Israel has between the Jordan River and its populated coast, they would not need any missiles. Artillery and mortars would suffice, since Israel would be only nine miles wide at its waist. Those who urge such a course either do not understand the situation or have a death wish for Israel. **Myth:** If Israel would allow a Palestinian state to arise in Judea/Samaria and in the Gaza Strip it would be a democratic state and would be totally demilitarized. **Reality:** There is no prospect at all that anything resembling a democratic state could be created. There is not a single democratic Arab state—all of them are tyrannies of varying degrees. Even today, under Israeli administration, the PLO, the Islamic fundamentalists, and other factions fight for supremacy and ruthlessly murder each other. A country torn apart by civil strife like Lebanon is likely to be a much better prospect. As for demilitarization, it is totally unlikely that—with Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, all of which are in a declared state of war with Israel at its borders—a power vacuum would be possible. Despite pious promises, the arms merchants of the world would find a great new market; and the neighboring hostile Arab countries would be happy to supply anything else that might be needed. **Myth:** Israel should make "confidence building" gestures for the sake of peace. **Reality:** What really is it that the world expects Israel to do for the sake of peace? Twenty-one of the twenty-two Arab countries consider themselves in a state of war with Israel and don't even recognize its "existence". That has been going on for forty-five years. Wouldn't it be about time that the Arabs made some kind of a "gesture"? Could they not for instance terminate the state of war? Could they not finally abolish the economic boycott against Israel that has been in place for over forty years—long before Israel came into the administration of the "West Bank"? Could they not stop the yearly charade of attempting the expulsion of Israel from the United Nations? Any single one of these would be such a "gesture", but none is forthcoming.

Now that the parties to the conflict in the Middle East are engaged, for over a year, in an on-again/off-again peace conference, the old clichés are being trotted out again and the old myths resurrected in order to pressure Israel to make "concessions". Israel is America's staunchest ally and certainly its only true ally in that area of the world. It is in our national interest that stark reality, not myths, govern any peace negotiations.

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fair to making his continuation as Attorney General untenable, Mr. McKay, admirably, issued a statement that there would be no indictment. But unlike Stein's report of his earlier investigation, Mr. McKay's report stated, quite gratuitously, and far less than admirably, that though Meese would not be prosecuted, Mr. McKay found that he had violated two laws. In fact, Meese had not, and his counsel told Mr. McKay that he had no authority to make such charges when he was not indicting. As Mr. McKay says, the statute requires an independent counsel to state his reasons for not prosecuting; it most certainly does not require him to say that the man is nevertheless guilty. The appointing court, apparently unwilling to be charged with suppression of a politically-charged document, released the report and Meese was damaged without a chance to clear his name. It is unheard of for a regular prosecutor to refuse to indict but announce to the world that the man is guilty.

We may now look forward to the report Walsh and his staff are preparing. If the intemperateness of the past is any guide to the future, we may expect to learn that Walsh regards George Bush, Caspar Weinberger, and a number of others as guilty, and that these accusations and the OIC's one-sided versions of the evidence will be spread on the public record with no opportunity for effective rebuttal. Individuals will be maligned, their reputations tarnished, and two Republican administrations found morally wanting, and probably criminal.

If the independent-counsel statute did not require the criminalization of policy differences, it certainly permitted just that. If, after Congress has started the process out of political motives, an overly zealous independent counsel is not himself motivated by political considerations, the result is the same as if he were. The institution of the court-appointed independent counsel is an abomination in the halls of justice.

The Nixon Administration & the Jewish Community

To the Editor of Commentary:

Leonard Garment's review of Peter Golden's *Quiet Diplomat: A Biography of Max M. Fisher* [Books in Review, February] is in itself a strong contribution to the history of the Nixon administration's relationship to the Jewish community. Although I disagreed with Fisher's stance on a number of issues (I was the first chairman of the National Conference on Soviet Jews), my contacts with Mr. Garment, who dealt with the problems of Jewish emigration on an almost daily basis from his office in the Executive Office Building, were consistently positive, forthright, and direct on his part. Mr. Garment was an insider who left the Washington scene with his reputation intact; not easy in those days!

Mr. Garment writes that "during the Yom Kippur War of 1973, Fisher lobbied the President and Henry Kissinger nonstop (estimate: at least 100 phone calls) for rapid resupply of the Israelis." If the number of calls is correct, they went entirely to Kissinger who was the de-facto President, operating from the basement "situation room" of the White House, while Nixon was engaged wholly in playing and replaying his tapes in the living quarters on the second floor. He was trying to find reasons for refusing to turn the tapes over to Judge Sirica, and it was during this same week that the seventeen-minute gap or blank in the tapes appeared.

In any event, Fisher's calls were unproductive. The war began on a Saturday. On the following Wednesday, in response to urgent pleas from the Israelis and American Jews as well, Kissinger announced that the resupply could not begin until there was sufficient transport to carry the munitions. On the same day, the office of the Secretary of Defense informed Senator Henry Jackson that the resupply could begin immediately if the order to do so were given from the White House basement. As we know, the resupply did not begin until the following Saturday, almost too late for the Israelis.

As for Fisher's attempt to "head off the passage of the Jackson-Vanik amendment," it may well be that he made the estimated 100 phone calls, but they were made to Jewish leaders in the Soviet-Jewish emigration movement, and at the behest of the President. Kissinger's role in this effort has not, to my knowledge, been fully detailed. It is not a story which will reflect favorably on his reputation. But again, Leonard Garment's role was sincere, direct, and helpful.

Richard Maass
White Plains, New York

Leonard Garment writes:

A natural consequence of Richard Maass's generous words about me is to cause my pen to run almost dry. Suffice it to say, therefore, that his comments about two highly complicated fact issues—responsibility for the delayed resupply of the Israelis in the Yom Kippur War and Henry Kissinger's undefined "role" in the emigration of Soviet Jews—are too allusive for a reply. My point, in any event, was simply that Max Fisher tried hard to expedite both outcomes. Mr. Maass's comments about Richard Nixon can be answered briefly: it is silly (or worse) to suggest that Nixon was "engaged wholly in playing and replaying" his Watergate tapes during the Yom Kippur War. He was, in fact, working hard on a flood of domestic and foreign issues—including the crucial resupply of Israel, a project which succeeded because Nixon overruled his overcautious security advisers and ordered the use of every available military cargo plane to make sure the crucial airlift would be a success. And it was.

Lessons of the Holocaust

To the Editor of Commentary:

In the last footnote of his article, "What the Holocaust Does *Not* Teach" [February], Edward Alexander chides me mildly for my use of an important document, first published as a facsimile in a book by David Irving, and for citing Irving as a source.

The item in question is an excerpt from the telephone log of Heinrich Himmler, noting an order he was giving in the course of a call at 1:30 P.M. on November 30, 1941, to his subordinate, the Security Police Chief Reinhard Heydrich, who was also the *Reichsprotektor* in Prague at the time. Because of the nature of the order, and the fact that the call was placed from Hitler's bunker, Irving surmised that Himmler was passing on a decision by Hitler himself. The crucial lines are: "Jewish transport from Berlin. No liquidation." Irving did not know where the transport was headed and what happened to it on arrival. The German historian Martin Broszat concluded that the train

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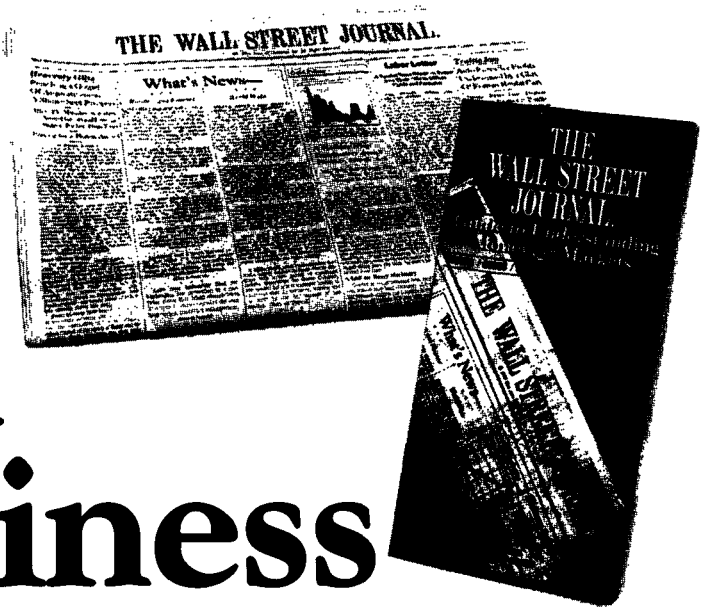

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was routed to Riga, and that all of its passengers were shot by Security Police only hours after the call.

The scenario thus reconstructed is buttressed by everything we know about deportations from Berlin and conditions in the Riga area. Yet Mr. Alexander considers an alternate explanation, proposed by Lucy S. Dawidowicz in 1981, as unassailable "beyond any possibility of contradiction." Mrs. Dawidowicz dismissed not only Irving, whom she called an amateur, but also Broszat, who was highly knowledgeable. She combined the two lines pertaining to the transport with two preceding lines that deal with an unrelated subject: a non-Jew. Then she speculated that the admonition "No liquidation" applied only to that man and that he was on the Jewish transport. Finally, she asserted that this train arrived in—of all places—Prague. Need I say more?

RAUL HILBERG
Burlington, Vermont

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Edward Alexander tells us that, according to the historian Lucy S. Dawidowicz, the "true lessons" of the Holocaust were

> . . . the infectious power of anti-Semitism, especially when embodied in the state. . . . The importance of a strong countervailing military force (so that Hitler would not have had his way in Europe). . . . The necessity of Jewish political power and a Jewish state for Jewish survival.

I could not agree more. But have these lessons been learned?

Given the "infectious power of anti-Semitism," why have so many Jews returned to live in Germany so that, for example, the city of Düsseldorf is jokingly called "*Judendorf*" these days? Why is it that Jews are still to be found in the graveyard called Poland? And how long before Jews will return to Lithuania and Ukraine? Haven't Jews learned the obvious lesson that they are not welcome among other nations, and that they are not loved even in the so-called "good countries"?

Why do we rejoice in the growth of new Jewish centers of population in places like Toronto, Los Angeles, and Miami? . . . Does not the emigration of many Israelis who have chosen to live permanently or temporarily in the Diaspora show that the primary lesson of the Holocaust, "the necessity of Jewish political power and a Jewish state for Jewish survival," has been forgotten?

I am happy, though, that Mr. Alexander cannot lay the blame for the emigration at the doorstep of Israel's new Minister of Education, Shulamit Aloni, for it began decades ago and grew even under Likud governments. But it is regrettable that, in another context, Mr. Alexander deems it necessary to attack Mrs. Aloni (a fashionable position these days). He accuses her of taking "it upon herself to reverse the direction of [Israel's] study and commemoration of the Holocaust." He further claims that:

> Even before her elevation to office, Mrs. Aloni had frequently denounced Holocaust education in Israel because it taught children that "the Nazis did this to the Jews instead of the message that people did this to people." If Mrs. Aloni has her way, the Nazi murder of the Jews of Europe, a crime of terrifying clarity and distinctness, will become for young Israelis a blurred, amorphous agony, an indeterminate part of man's inhumanity to man.

I disagree with Mr. Alexander because I believe that humanistic education of the kind Mrs. Aloni is recommending would give Israelis a better and clearer vision than they now have. At present, the system stresses the inhumanity of Nazi Germany toward the Jews. . . . But an education which teaches that anti-Semitism is transmitted through mother's milk, that certain peoples are inherently bad, and which denies the value of teaching friendship, understanding, and tolerance among peoples—such an education is false, damaging, and dangerous. Thus, Mrs. Aloni's preference for teaching that "people did this to people" is perfectly reasonable. . . .

Humanistic education, which in Israel's present situation may seem quixotic, impractical, even foolish, is basically the best hope for a just, healthy, and strong society, even when there is a temporary need to maintain a constant state of vigilance and use force to protect the country.

I cannot believe that Mrs. Aloni, despite her liberal and leftist political orientation, and despite occasional statements (which may have been taken out of context), is insensitive to the Holocaust and the suffering of Jews, or that she deliberately set out to whitewash Nazi crimes and make Israelis forget the lessons of the Holocaust.

As one who lost his parents, two sisters, and a brother in the Holocaust, I would not defend Mrs. Aloni if I had reason to believe that these were her intentions. . . .

JACOB BENJAMINI
Mt. Laurel, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . In addition to the very important lessons of the Holocaust Edward Alexander presents so well, there is another lesson he refuses to learn: the one that teaches us the special responsibility of the Jews.

"Never Again" is a slogan we Jews frequently utter . . . and it means that, as Jews, we shall never again be kept silent. We shall voice our opposition, and do the best we can to stop the massacre of innocent people and save the lives of both Jews and non-Jews. Elie Wiesel seems to share this view, since he has been trying to put an end to the slaughter in the Balkans. Similarly, . . . Menachem Begin set an example when, as Prime Minister, he offered refuge in Israel to 200 Vietnamese boat people. And, on the other side of Israel's political map, Yitzhak Rabin has shown that he accepts the idea of the special responsibility of the Jews by bringing hundreds of Bosnian Muslims to Israel. In this, Israel acted just as Flora Lewis had urged in her *New York Times* column in which she said that, because of their past suffering, Jews have a special obligation to help other victims of persecution.

But this view is exactly what Mr. Alexander attacks her for, calling it a "peculiarly perverse lesson to extract from the Holocaust," since

> its unstated corollary (as Conor Cruise O'Brien once pointed out in a different context) is that the descendants of people who have *not* been persecuted have no special responsibility to behave particularly well.

This is where we see Mr. Alexander at his worst—twisting and distorting a position he disagrees with. For nowhere in his article does he present a shred of evidence to show that Flora Lewis subscribes to this so-called "corollary" and believes that *only* Jews have a special responsibility to help others. Nor does he bother to tell

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us in what context O'Brien made his statement and what it referred to so that we might judge for ourselves whether it applied to the Holocaust. . . .

YA'ACOV TYGIEL
San Jose, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The most important lesson of practical value that Jews can derive from the Holocaust is that the murder of one-third of their number was ultimately made possible by Jewish powerlessness. Edward Alexander is to be commended for mentioning this in his article, even if he makes it a poor third on his list. . . .

Jews do not affirm this message, but choose instead to censor it by their silence. I have sat through many a Holocaust memorial and *Kristallnacht* commemoration and can testify that the bill of fare is absolutely predictable: some musical selection, *Kaddish*, *Ani Maamin*, vows of "Never Again," and a high-minded moralistic oration. . . . Yet if the Jews really meant "Never Again," they would leave those memorial meetings resolved to rally *en masse* around the world's one locus of real Jewish power—the state of Israel—and back it to the hilt, especially when one of its assertive acts gets a bad press. . . .

I suggest that the insights of Richard L. Rubenstein offer an excellent starting point in our effort to understand why Jews resist drawing lessons of value from the Holocaust. For nineteen centuries, Jewish culture counseled submission to Gentile overlords and discouraged both individual and group self-assertion. . . . The ethically sublime Jewish way of life conditioned us to regard violence as un-Jewish and to prefer the role of victim. This attitude accounts in no small measure for the lack of support on the part of organized Jewish communities for the Zionist effort until the 1930's. It is not unfair, therefore, to charge adherence to cherished Jewish "values" with having set up East European Jewry for the murderers. To acknowledge this is difficult enough. However, it obviously is harder yet for many to take the next logical step and begin wholeheartedly to identify with the use of force by Jews in behalf of Jewish interests. And that is why we find bogus and irrelevant lessons in the Holocaust instead of the ones that it would do us some good to learn.

Mr. Alexander rightly criticizes the teachers of the Holocaust who try to make it into a generic case of man's extreme inhumanity to man. However, the Jews who focus on the fact that the Holocaust was directed against Jews might do well to consider the impact . . . this has on the world at large. In a time when many are proud to be seen as swastika-flaunting skinheads, it may well be that constant publicizing of the successful murder of one-third of the Jews encourages some to say not "Never again," but rather "If at first you don't succeed—." . . .

ZALMAN GAIBEL
Chicago, Illinois

EDWARD ALEXANDER writes:

In her book on *The Holocaust and the Historians*, Lucy S. Dawidowicz used David Irving's analysis of the document in question to illustrate his method. To "prove" that the murder of the Jews was committed behind Hitler's back, Irving "interpreted" lines three and four of a four-line telephone message sent by Himmler (then in Hitler's military-headquarters bunker) on November 30, 1941 to SS leader Heydrich, then in Prague: "*Judentransport aus Berlin/keine Liquidierung*" (Transport of Jews from Berlin. No liquidation). From these two lines Irving magically "surmised" (to use Raul Hilberg's term) that Hitler had learned of the murderous mischief Himmler was up to and ordered him to stop, and that Himmler, as an obedient Nazi, had called Heydrich in Prague to transmit Hitler's order. In the note to my essay, I expressed surprise that Mr. Hilberg had seemed to endorse Irving's exculpation of Hitler (his hero) on this one occasion.

Even someone who pondered only the two lines stressed by Irving might well ask why, since Himmler continued to "liquidate" the Jews after November 30, 1941, he stopped (or, rather, tried to stop) the liquidation of this one transport. If he really deceived Hitler both before and after this date about the murder of the Jews, why, asked Mrs. Dawidowicz, should he have been so forthright on this single occasion? And since, as Mr. Hilberg reminds us in his letter, the passengers were murdered hours after the call was placed, how can Irving's "surmise" possibly explain those two lines?

Mrs. Dawidowicz argued that these questions are shown to be academic once we read the rest of the message, which Irving neglected to discuss. The first two lines are: "*Verhaftung Dr. Jekelius/ Angebl [ich] Sohn Molotovs*," that is, "Arrest Dr. Jekelius/Presumably Molotov's son." In other words, she maintained, if we consider lines three and four of the phone message in relation to lines one and two, we understand that Himmler was instructing Heydrich that one Dr. Jekelius, apparently the Soviet Foreign Minister's son, was being taken into custody by the security police. Jekelius could be located in the transport of Jews from Berlin; unlike the rest of the transport, he was *not* to be liquidated (presumably because he might be exchanged for a German officer in the hands of the Russians). Thus, Mrs. Dawidowicz concluded, did Irving end up confuting his own theory. For *if* Hitler were responsible, as Irving (without evidence) assumed, for Himmler's call, then Irving had of course shown that Hitler knew all about "liquidations."

Mr. Hilberg criticizes Mrs. Dawidowicz for "dismissing" Martin Broszat, implying that she did so on *ad-hominem* grounds. In fact, her only reference to Broszat in connection with the interpretation of this document came in a note alluding to his "very convoluted but unconvincing explanation" in an essay of 1977. Although Mr. Hilberg invokes Broszat in the letter printed above, the only source he cites in his book for the assertion that Hitler once "vetoed the killing of a thousand Jews" is Irving.

There are at least two objections to Jacob Benjamini's notion of the "perfect reasonableness" of teaching that it was not Nazi Germany that murdered Jews during the Holocaust but, in Mrs. Aloni's immortal words, "people [who] did this to people." The first, as the several hundred books exploring the questions "Why the Germans? Why the Jews?" might suggest, is that it is false. We study history not to prop up humbug and disseminate cant, but to discover the truth. One of Lucy Dawidowicz's favorite mottos was Cicero's: "The first law for the historian is that he shall never dare utter an untruth. The second is that he suppress nothing that is true." But to stress the way in which the anti-Semitism embodied in the Nazi state caused

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Germans of the Hitler regime to commit abominable crimes is just the opposite of teaching "that anti-Semitism is transmitted through mother's milk," etc. Mr. Benjamini may wish to note that the Israeli politician who, in the wake of last year's neo-Nazi attacks on foreigners in Germany, made the ludicrous proposal that Israel break off relations with Germany because of its allegedly incurable racism was none other than Mrs. Aloni. (She has not suggested similar reprisals against the PLO for murdering Jews.)

Apparently Ya'acov Tygiel has trouble distinguishing between Isaiah, urging Jews to "share your food with the hungry, and take the poor to your home," and Flora (or Anthony) Lewis, singling out Jews as the favorite target of international discrimination; between, in other words, moral striving and political scapegoating. Just how unrelated these things are is suggested by the fact that Israel was already bringing Bosnian refugees (children) to Israel when Flora Lewis wrote her article. All international villains relish reasoning like that of Flora Lewis and Mr. Tygiel. When Israel accepted Muslim refugees from Bosnia, mayors of Arab villages under the sway of the PLO condemned the action because "We have reached the conclusion that this is an operation aimed at improving Israel's image. . . ." Having accepted the Lewis-Tygiel principle that Jews have "special responsibility" because they are descendants of those who suffered in the Holocaust, the Arabs, as descendants of those who collaborated in inflicting that suffering, conclude that they not only have *no* responsibility, but can be excused for behavior that would be entirely unacceptable in the descendants of the victims.

Zalman Gaibel may have a point about how knowledge of the "success" of Nazi anti-Semitism in destroying European Jewry can encourage continuators of the Nazis to try to finish their work. But I am afraid that the secret is already out, and unless we are to restrict publication of writing about the Holocaust to work in Hebrew or Latin, we have to live with that fact. One might also note that those people who claim to disbelieve that the Holocaust ever took place are surely not the people least committed to repeating it. I need hardly add that all discussion of what happened to the Jews of Europe should be accompanied by discussion of what happened to the regime that destroyed them.

Gobineau

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I would like to comment on Robert S. Wistrich's review of Frank E. Manuel's *The Broken Staff: Judaism Through Christian Eyes* [Books in Review, February]. Robert Wistrich should know better, and Frank Manuel, whom he criticizes for lack of evidence for his statement that Joseph de Gobineau had "an enormous influence on the appreciation of Judaism in the second half of the 19th century," is right. As for evidence, Gobineau's *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* contains a long eulogy of the Jews, its last sentence being:

> I repeat, they were a clever people in all their undertakings; a strong, a free, an intelligent people who before losing, in courageous combat, the title of an independent nation, had provided the world with almost as many scholars as merchants.

The full text can be found in my book, *The Aryan Myth* (Basic Books, 1974, pp. 235-36).

LÉON POLIAKOV

Massy, France

ROBERT S. WISTRICH writes:

I find Léon Poliakov's letter baffling. He quotes a passage from Gobineau which confirms my point that the father of modern racism was no anti-Semite but actually admired the Jews. However, this statement of Gobineau hardly proves that he had an "enormous influence" on the appreciation of Judaism, an assertion which still appears to me to be a gross exaggeration. Philo-Semites scarcely needed Gobineau's dilettante philosophy of history to make their case, while anti-Semites gave his racist views a slant which he had not intended. It was in Germany, as Mr. Poliakov knows, that the merging of Gobineau's racial outlook with political anti-Semitism had a real impact at the end of the 19th century. If we are talking about an "enormous influence," then this would better apply to anti-Semites like Richard Wagner and Houston S. Chamberlain, who are barely mentioned in Frank Manuel's book. Among Frenchmen, the same could be said of Ernest Renan (about whom Mr. Manuel makes some good points) and Edouard Drumont, who in their very different ways, had more influence on late-19th-century views of Judaism than did Gobineau.

Finlandization

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Walter Laqueur's conclusions in "A Postscript on Finlandization" [January], that Finland acquiesced in Soviet wishes and indulged in self-censorship, are accurate enough—but oh, the power of geography and a formidable neighbor (Russia)! And how harsh is his judgment that Urho Kekkonen, who was President of Finland from 1956 through 1981, set a bad example for the rest of Europe.

Mr. Laqueur also discloses that the KGB channeled funds to aid Kekkonen's election efforts. Though two political wrongs never equal a right, how different was the Kremlin activity in Finland from that undertaken by the CIA to affect the outcome of elections in states around the world?

In any event, perhaps some history might shed light on the Finnish question.

Prior to World War I, Finland was controlled by the Russian czars. In 1917, amid the chaos in revolutionary Russia, Finland declared its independence of Russia. An attempt was made to introduce a Soviet regime, . . . but landowners and the middle class organized under Baron Mannerheim (a Swedish Finn) to oppose the Red Guard. German troops landed, and the Guard was defeated. The Finnish Diet opted for a republic and a constitution. Finland was admitted to the League of Nations in 1920. . . .

During the world depression, Finland experimented briefly with fascism. Was that act lost on Moscow? Finland's foreign policy was controlled by those who were (understandably) anti-Soviet. Hitler had ties to Finnish national leaders. Then came the Russo-Finnish war of 1939-40; afterward, Finland joined the Nazis.

Even as late as 1944, Finland's President Ryti favored supporting the Nazis. But the bulk of Finns, along with Field Marshal Mannerheim, realized the futility of this alliance. Accordingly, Finland de-

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cleared war on Nazi Germany. (At the Nuremberg trials, evidence of Mannerheim's collaboration with the Nazis was presented; he resigned.) At the end of the war, Finland ceded territory to the Soviet Union and agreed to make reparations. . . .

Whatever the depth of iniquity in the former Soviet Union, it must be noted nevertheless that, for Moscow, Finlandization was more a matter of geostrategic and political-military considerations than a manifestation of raw aggrandizement.

ELLIOTT A. COHEN
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "A Postscript on Finlandization," Walter Laqueur, who deserves credit for his article on Finland in COMMENTARY in the late 70's ["The Specter of Finlandization," 1977], refers to a book entitled *The CPSU and Finland: Secret Documents, 1955-68.* Mr. Laqueur writes that the documents in the book proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that the leading supporters of the Kekkonen line had been paid millions of Finnmarks by the KGB: some of this money was used for election campaigns, but there were also payments for personal use.

Urho Kekkonen was President of Finland for almost 26 years. (After his resignation in 1981 because of illness, a Finnish "22nd amendment" was added to the constitution.) But he might have been defeated in his first bid for reelection in 1962 if he had not plotted with the KGB. The recently opened Soviet Communist party archives contain documents relating to this sordid affair.

Actually, the request for KGB money, though written and signed by one of the president's confidants, is small potatoes when compared with Kekkonen's further negotiations with the Soviets, which were kept secret even from his own entourage. These dealings concerned Kekkonen's request that the Kremlin send a diplomatic note proposing talks between the Finnish and Soviet governments in response to a spurious West German military threat to Northern Europe.

The note was delivered late in the election campaign. It frightened the Finnish people and shattered the broad coalition of parties both Left and Right that had put up a candidate against Kekkonen. Kekkonen's victory was thus ensured and the term Finlandization given deeper meaning.

The Soviet documents reveal that the sole purpose of the note was to interfere in the domestic affairs of the USSR's small neighbor. Since the neighbor's head of state was shown to be the initiator of this action, it is hardly surprising that in the debate that followed these revelations, some even touched on treason.

Mr. Laqueur writes that he has "a certain weakness for Kekkonen: the erstwhile winner of an Olympic gold medal in the high jump could not be all bad." Such a feeling, however, is misplaced, since Kekkonen's "finest hour" in sports came not in the Olympics but when he once won the Finnish championship in the high jump, clearing six feet and a few inches.

GEORG C. EHRNROOTH
Helsinki, Finland

The Peace Process

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

There is no reason to fault Norman Podhoretz ["A Statement on the Peace Process," April] for taking a position on a matter affecting the security of Israel different from that of Israel's government. Not being an Israeli does not disqualify Mr. Podhoretz from stating his views, even though, as he admits, he saw matters differently when others criticized the past Likud government. Moreover, no one can question Mr. Podhoretz's deep commitment to the well-being of Israel and the Jewish people.

The real issue in "A Statement on the Peace Process" is not Mr. Podhoretz's right to voice alarm as to where the peace process is headed now that Yitzhak Rabin, not Yitzhak Shamir, is Israel's Prime Minister, but whether Mr. Podhoretz offers an alternative to the present peace process that is more likely to ensure the long-term security of Israel. Regrettably, Mr. Podhoretz does not offer any alternatives, leaving the reader to conclude that the only alternative is to do nothing or, as Mr. Podhoretz hints in his article, go through the charade of engaging in a peace process in order to keep America off Israel's back. This is

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all right, Mr. Podhoretz would have us believe, so long as the Israeli negotiators do not forget that the real objective is to give up time, not territory—in other words, maintain the status quo. This approach was flatly rejected in the spring of 1989 by none other than Prime Minister Shamir who stated in a speech to Washington's elite that Israel's governance over the daily lives of 1.5 million Arab inhabitants in the territories and Gaza District was unacceptable to Israel. In announcing what became known as the Shamir/Rabin plan, Shamir set the course that has led to the present negotiations. If the peace process itself, inaugurated by the former Likud government, is not the problem, what Mr. Podhoretz is saying is that he has no confidence in the peace process now that Rabin, not Shamir, is at the helm. Surely, this is a choice for the Israelis to make, not those living 6,000 miles away.

Unless one argues for a "greater Israel" based on religious grounds or Revisionist ideology, and this does not include Mr. Podhoretz, the question of territorial compromise is a security issue, nothing more. The peace process, if successful, would in the first instance lead to an interim self-governing authority for the Palestinians in the territories and an agreement on a staged Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights in return for "full peace" with Syria. Mr. Podhoretz may be right that the interim self-governing authority will some day lead to a Palestinian state, aligned or nonaligned with Jordan, in part or all of the territories. Once again, this is an issue for the Israelis to decide when and if the choice must be made, but it is not in itself justification for not pursuing the peace process inaugurated in November 1991 in Madrid on terms largely dictated by Israel and applauded by every country in the world that counts for anything.

The alternatives to the present peace process are bleak. Israel can neither absorb nor disgorge the 1.5 million Palestinians in the territories and Gaza. The former would undermine the democratic Jewish state and the latter is both morally objectionable and politically suicidal from the standpoint of Israel's relationship with the United States and much of the rest of the world. Most Israelis recognize that the Palestinians are a political problem, not a fundamental security threat. Terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians are designed to affect the internal politics of Israel as well as the pace and direction of the peace talks, but they do not mount a threat to Israel's security. The same thing is true of whatever form of Palestinian entity eventually emerges. Absent missiles, airplanes, nonconventional weapons, and the like, which Israel will retain the ability to ban, the Palestinians will not pose a military threat to Israel.

Mr. Podhoretz's wait-and-see policy has merit only if one believes that absent the current peace process, conditions in the Arab world will improve from Israel's standpoint, making it advantageous for Israel to wait until more moderate, if not wholly democratic, regimes emerge along the lines of Egypt. Even an inveterate optimist would pause before believing this will occur anytime soon. The Middle East is the one area in the world where, except for Israel, democracy is unable to penetrate. The more likely scenario is not that democracy will gain but that Islamic fundamentalists will triumph and succeed in overthrowing existing regimes in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and perhaps elsewhere. Progress in the peace process bolsters moderate forces; lack of progress favors the fundamentalists. This is why Hamas and its Islamic-extremist counterparts elsewhere are intent on sabotaging the peace talks.

For the foreseeable future, the real threat to Israel's security lies in the proliferation of nonconventional weapons in such unfriendly hands as Iran, Iraq, and Syria. Israel's concern during the Gulf war was that Iraq would unleash Scud missiles tipped with chemical warheads. Although it now appears that Iraq did not have the capability to send such weapons, it is only a matter of time before countries in the Middle East unfriendly to Israel obtain or develop the necessary technology. To counter this, Israel is dependent upon the United States for the technical and financial support needed to develop counter-weapons such as the Arrow missile that will intercept incoming missiles before they begin their descent, and booster-phase intercept missiles. If Israel is seen to be dragging its feet in the peace process or withdrawing altogether, as Mr. Podhoretz advocates, it is bound to face a slowdown and eventual pause in U.S. support. This is a greater threat to the security of Israel than anything the Palestinians can mount.

ALFRED H. MOSES
President
American Jewish Committee
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz's article is very logical in its analysis of the situation in Israel. He argues eloquently against the present peace process because it will bring about the establishment of an independent Palestinian state which in turn will endanger Israel's existence. Unfortunately, he does not offer any alternative either to the present talks or to the major problem facing Israel.

Being an Israeli citizen, I will not enter the debate on whether or not American Jews should criticize Israeli policy. But I would like to hear from Mr. Podhoretz how Israel is to deal with more than a million hostile Arabs who clearly do not want to live under Israeli rule. Likud and the Gush Emunim movement, which are vehemently opposed to any territorial compromise, offer two main reasons to support their opposition. One is the "historic-rights" argument and the other is the security argument.

The first of these arguments is never stressed when Israelis speak to foreign audiences. . . . In Israel it is used more often, but even there it takes second place to the security argument. Israel Eldad, one of the leaders of the extremist Stern group, which operated prior to the existence of the Jewish state, and a staunch nationalist who opposes any Israeli withdrawal, said in 1968 that if the Arabs were willing to give up the West Bank he would be willing to give up any claims to the East Bank. Now if a man like Eldad . . . is willing to give up part of *Eretz Israel*, why could not Rabin give up part of the West Bank?

I grew up in the right-wing Jabotinsky movement and I still think that Israel has historic rights on both sides of the Jordan River. But it is clear that this is an impossible dream and nobody considers it seriously. The security argument is therefore the most important. In this connection let us consider what would have happened if Israel had continued Li-

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kud's policy. The Arab population would have become more and more belligerent and, as we recently witnessed, would have moved from stones to guns. How would Israel respond?

We have always been unable to muster the necessary means to subdue terrorism because we are not like our neighboring countries. We cannot follow the Hamas model or the example of Saddam Hussein, for we are not built to be torturers and oppressors. We had the most benign and humane occupation in history. We introduced better health care, allowed five universities to open and function freely, built new roads, and introduced modern agricultural methods. We even tried to build new housing in Gaza. But it was all in vain. These people did not want any of it. What they wanted was to be independent.

There is a grave danger that continuous and endless escalation of violence may even bring the Israeli Arabs into the struggle. I want to point out that up until now the Israeli Arabs have shown remarkable loyalty to Israel. Between 1948 and 1967 there was not a single act of sabotage against the state. . . . During the 1967 and 1973 wars many Arab villagers helped their Jewish neighbors with agricultural work because most of the Jewish farmers were in the army. Last year for the first time three Israeli Arabs who had become Muslim fundamentalists attacked an army outpost and murdered three soldiers. They were caught and most of the Arabs denounced the deed. But can you imagine the enormity of the problem if more and more of the 800,000 Israeli Arabs were to join in terrorist acts? Do you think that frequent knifings in broad daylight in the streets of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem are conducive to a normal life and a feeling of security? I do not think so.

Norman Podhoretz has close family in Jerusalem. Is he able to take a stroll in the Old City in the evening with his four grandchildren? He is not. As a medical student in Jerusalem from 1953 to 1959, I would frequently come home after midnight, walking all the way from the university to Derech Beit Lechem, which was only a few yards from the border. Not once did I even give a thought to a possible terrorist attack. Israel knows how to guard borders. It is a fact that before the Six-Day War there was not a single act of terrorism in Israeli cities. The terrorist infiltration was limited to the border moshavim and kibbutzim. Between the wars, Israeli civilians were able to live a remarkably normal life. They were able to absorb more than a million immigrants and to develop a remarkable scientific and industrial base. All this was made possible because the army could prevent terror in the major population centers. Today that is impossible. It was a more than bitter irony some weeks ago when on the same day that the Israeli army announced the successful launching of a sophisticated rocket, a terrorist entered a school in Jerusalem and stabbed several children and their principal.

The conclusion should be obvious. Israel must separate itself from the bulk of the hostile Palestinian population even if this means giving up most of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza. I would go further and say that this can be done unilaterally. Israel can delineate its own borders, which must include Jerusalem and Gush Etzion, and then simply withdraw even if the Arabs are not willing to accept that proposal. Israel will then be better able to protect those borders, prevent infiltration, and make the streets of its cities safe once again. Israel is strong enough militarily to prevent any foreign army from crossing the Jordan. Its army can reestablish the superiority that now is somewhat tarnished. As for the Golan Heights, if Assad will not agree to a peace agreement but just to nonbelligerency, then there will be no peace with Syria. Unlike Judea and Samaria, the Golan Heights has no hostile population and can be kept in Israeli hands indefinitely or until Syria will agree to a peace agreement which takes into consideration the need for Israeli security. . . .

JACOB AMIR
Little Rock, Arkansas

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

So Norman Podhoretz has had a change of heart and now believes that it is OK for American Jews to criticize Israeli policy. How tempting it is to denounce Mr. Podhoretz for being "anti-Israel" and a "self-hating Jew," the way I and other long-time supporters of the Israeli Left have been vilified so many times by him and his ideological brethren.

Instead, I would like to congratulate him for finally recognizing that residence in Israel is not required in order to have the "moral standing," as Mr. Podhoretz puts it, to participate in the debate over Israeli policy. But this alleged change of heart seems somewhat suspect to me. Mr. Podhoretz has *always* permitted himself to participate in this debate. Having a government in Israel of which he approved (first Begin's, then Shamir's) allowed him to portray his type of participation as legitimate since it communicated support, not criticism.

But, alas, the Israeli government (not Mr. Podhoretz's heart) changed, and now that it is his turn to play the part of loyal opposition, he wants to change the rules. It is interesting to witness the contortions Mr. Podhoretz goes through to legitimize *his* kind of criticism while continuing to vilify those "other" critics. Mr. Podhoretz permits himself to question "the prudential wisdom of [Israel's] policies," because he does so "when its policies are meeting with general approval." How courageous he makes this sound!

It cannot be, of course, that Israel's policies are meeting with approval because they make sense. Mr. Podhoretz actually considers this possibility for a fleeting moment, but then rejects it outright. It is an article of faith among many that the test of any Israeli policy is the reaction it provokes; the more isolated and beleaguered Israel becomes, the better the proof of its rightness. How tragic that Israeli policy was actually formulated on the basis of this self-defeating premise for so many years.

When one cuts through the distortions and invective of the Right, the basic belief of the Israeli Left and its U.S. supporters is this: while Israel and the Jews do in fact have enemies, the whole world is not infected by this enmity, and enemies can become motivated to make peace because it is no longer in their interest to wage war (Sadat and Mubarak have shown us that). But even if this is hard to swallow, it should be possible to accept that those with opposing views might be motivated by the same concern for Israel's welfare.

When I see that Mr. Podhoretz accepts this premise, I will tell my Israeli friends and family that his love for Israel is what gives him the standing to voice his misguided views, not a cynical determination

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("from the safety of America") to fight to the last Israeli.

TONY FRANK
Evanston, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his April "Statement," Norman Podhoretz breaks ranks with mainstream Jewish community organizations like ours which, on a moral and strategic basis, have held that decisions on peace and security should be left in the hands of the Israelis, whose lives are on the line and who make those decisions through a democratically elected government.

Mr. Podhoretz criticizes the current Israeli government because, in his view, "the peace process is a trap from which it will be very hard for Israel to escape," a trap which the Likud entered into to "buy Israel a little more time," but which Labor has wrongheadedly "enthusiastically embraced."

For all of his attempts to justify abandoning his earlier position on speaking out in such a manner, we believe that the principle that it is up to the Israelis themselves to establish policy on their own life-and-death issues remains intact. Meanwhile, the polarization of American Jewry, which Mr. Podhoretz's action accelerates, can only weaken the American Jewish community in fulfilling its role of promoting strong U.S.-Israel relations.

Individuals and organizations on the other end of the political spectrum from him may, as Mr. Podhoretz points out, have initiated the practice of criticizing the Israeli government. Those of us who strive to nurture an American Jewish community unified around "bottom-line" issues can only regret the fact that he has chosen to follow suit.

ROBERT H. ASHER
Chairman
MICHAEL C. KOTZIN
Director
Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish United Fund
Chicago, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . If only a few years ago Norman Podhoretz was so vigorously opposed to those American Jews who publicly criticized Israel's security policies—policies, in his own words, "literally involv[ing] the life and death of the state and its people"—why does he now deem it proper to criticize the Rabin government's approach to the peace process, the outcome of which may very well determine the long-term viability of the state and its people?

Certainly even editors have the right to change their minds; but let me remind Mr. Podhoretz of his earlier advice to American Jews who were critical of the Shamir government, which still makes good sense to me: that any of them wanting to acquire the standing to participate in public debate over Israel's security policies has only to board a plane for Tel Aviv (where my grandson's apartment was damaged by Iraqi missiles during the Gulf war) and claim citizenship under the Law of Return. Otherwise, Mr. Podhoretz, please spare us the moralizing peregrinations.

AARON GOLDMAN
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

While the peace process in the Middle East has promise with regard to possible regional cooperation on a number of worthwhile projects—water, economic relations, nuclear proliferation, and so on—as a practical matter nothing can be done on any of these subjects until the future of the West Bank, the Golan Heights, and the Gaza Strip is definitively settled. Given the inflamed state of Arab politics, and the prevalence of assassination, real progress toward peace is unlikely until the Palestinian problem is resolved. On that key issue, Norman Podhoretz's advice to Israel in the April issue is unanswerably correct. In negotiations which have now dragged on for two years or more, neither the Palestinian Arabs nor Jordan give any indication whatever that they are ready to make peace with Israel in accordance with UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.

The Arab boycott of Israel continues. No Arab state—not even Morocco or Saudi Arabia—has followed the example of China, Russia, India, and the other states which have recently established diplomatic relations with Israel. And all the evidence which has leaked out of the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian-Jordanian delegation confirms that the Israelis have offered concession after concession, while the Arabs, backed by the United States, remain exactly where they have been on the main issue, namely, that Israel should withdraw to the Armistice Demarcation Lines of 1949. The inevitable results of their strategy at this stage, the Arabs believe, would in fact be an agreement of nominal peace between Israel and a Palestinian state dominated by the PLO or by Hamas, with its capital in East Jerusalem.

But replacement of the armistice lines between Israel and Jordan with "secure and recognized boundaries" is one of the principal objectives of Resolutions 242 and 338, a "package deal" which authorizes Israel to administer the territories occupied during the Six-Day War until "a just and lasting peace is established in the Middle East." That peace would prescribe the new boundaries to which Israel would then withdraw. This was the step-by-step procedure which led to peace between Israel and Egypt. The present and prospective policies of Iran, Iraq, and Syria, to say nothing of the *intifada*, the rise of Hamas, and the current wave of murders in Israel, make it more urgent than ever, from the point of view of Israel's security and the stability of the region, to stick firmly to the territorial provisions of Resolutions 242 and 338.

Mr. Podhoretz is right. The peace process has become a trap for Israel. The Arab strategy is working. The Arabs remain intransigent, and the United States keeps pressing Israel to walk further and further down the slippery slope.

There is only one way to stop this catastrophe before it is too late. The United States and Israel should be as patient and stubborn as the Arabs in the talks. And the United States should repudiate the disastrous policy outlined in then-Secretary of State James Baker's speech of May 22, 1989—the Bush administration's only formal statement of its position on the problem—and return to the policy of Resolution 242, the only policy to which most of the world community is committed. Unless the peace process firmly and visibly returns to the principles of Resolution 242, it is bound to fail. Israel will not in the end commit suicide.

The reason this is true is so obvious it is often ignored. Media stories and political speeches routinely talk of Israeli occupation of "Arab lands" and of "returning" Arab lands to their rightful own-

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ers. This usage is mistaken. No Arab country has ever been recognized as sovereign in these territories. The Ottoman empire was their last sovereign ruler. They are parts of the British Mandate which have not yet been allocated either to Israel or to Jordan, the Arab and the Jewish states into which Palestine has been divided.

Israel's legal claim to the Palestine territories it occupied in the course of the Six-Day War—the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip—is therefore far stronger than that of Jordan or any other Arab country. They are territories in which, under the terms of the Mandate, the Jewish people have the indissoluble right to make "close settlements" (Article 6). Acknowledging the historic connection of the Jewish people with the land, the family of nations awarded the whole of Palestine west of the Jordan River to the Jews, on condition that the Jews respect the "civic and religious" rights of the non-Jewish inhabitants. The Jewish right of settlement in Palestine is protected against impairment by Article 80 of the United Nations Charter. And in any event, no authority has tried to terminate it. The International Court of Justice has ruled twice that the resignation or malfeasance of a mandatory power does not terminate a mandate as a trust. Thus, the Jewish right of "close settlement" is intact.

President Clinton should deliver a major address on the subject, making at least the following points:

1. It is in the national interest of the United States to help achieve an end of the long Arab war against Israel. No peace in the area would be just and lasting unless it respected the legal rights of the parties.

2. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, which together are legally binding under Article 25 of the UN Charter, provide the only possible way forward for such an effort, as the successful Camp David negotiations in 1977 attest.

3. Both sides have legal and moral claims to the land in question. Israel's right to make close settlements in Western Palestine is recognized by the Mandate and its history. That right has never been altered, and under Article 80 of the UN Charter, cannot be altered.

4. The Arab inhabitants of the land assert a right of self-determination as a natural right. Such claims must always be considered with respect, but are by no means absolute. In a world of states, treating self-determination as an absolute right would be a formula for chaos, not for peace and justice.

5. That is why the Security Council in Resolutions 242 and 338 ruled that the parties should agree on a peaceful compromise.

6. Under the Security Council Resolutions, the Israelis can hold and administer the territories until peace is achieved. The Western powers have objected to further Jewish settlement in the West Bank on the ground that such settlements would be an obstacle to peace. It is now clear, however, that the Shamir policy of encouraging new Jewish settlements in the territories helped stir the Arabs to undertake negotiations which they had resisted for many, many years. Obviously, if the Arabs persist in refusing to make peace more than a quarter of a century after the adoption of Resolution 242, there could be no valid objection to further exercise of the right of the Jewish people to make close settlements in the territories.

A statement along these lines should provide the Jordanians and the Palestinian Arabs with an incentive for moving rapidly toward peace.

EUGENE V. ROSTOW
National Defense University
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . For quite some time now, conservative American supporters of Israel have been stricken with an apparent paralysis about addressing the policies of the current Israeli government, largely for the legitimate reasons set forth in Norman Podhoretz's article. . . .

Like Mr. Podhoretz, and for many of the same reasons, I was troubled by . . . criticism of Israeli policy on the part of dovish American Jews when the Likud government was in power. It appears, however, that criticism of the policies of the Labor government has now been given the imprimatur of the Labor government itself, thus resolving this moral issue.

Prime Minister Rabin perforce endorsed not only the substance

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but the *concept* of dissent from official Israeli government policy when he excoriated the U.S. pro-Israel lobby—in particular the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)—for having, prior to Rabin's election, supported what were then the official positions of the duly constituted government of Israel. At the same time, he warmly embraced those—such as Americans for Peace Now—who had opposed Israel's policies.

. . . When the right of American Jews to participate and criticize has been thus endorsed as the implicit official policy of the current Israeli government, by what right may we decline?

KENNETH L. GARTNER
Mineola, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz's poignant and pointed article voices what many Jews of his generation have been feeling and saying. . . .

What I have never been able to understand is the cry, "land for peace." . . . Land is a tangible item: it can be farmed, mined, built on, used to house offensive and defensive troops and weapons, and, . . . as has been done throughout history, it can also be used as a buffer between nations. A declaration of nonbelligerency, even a peace treaty, on the other hand, is nothing more than a piece of paper with words on it. The lofty expressions contained thereon can be abrogated at a moment's notice at the whim of a belligerent nation. . . .

I am certain that within a decade of any signed document, there will be another war. If the UN is failing to act against Christians in Bosnia to help the beleaguered Muslims, does anyone really believe that it will come to the defense of Jews? In the next conflict, I do not believe that the U.S. will come to Israel's defense. I believe that changing demographics coupled with changing cultural and religious values, along with increasingly adverse economic conditions in the U.S., bode ill for Israel.

SHELDON F. GOTTLIEB
Mobile, Alabama

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Congratulations to Norman Podhoretz for speaking out as a Jew and as an American against the course Israel is now taking. . . . That course would leave Israel dependent for its security on promises of "peace" from enemies committed to its extinction, plus guarantees from "friends" who would not be able to rescue it in time if it were unable to defend itself.

In both Israel and the U.S., numbers of people cherish the illusions . . . that (1) peace will come about if Israel cedes control of the Golan, Judea, Samaria, and Gaza in exchange for empty promises and guarantees which have always proved ineffective; (2) the Arabs do not now have a Palestinian state, whereas in fact they have one in Jordan—the three-quarters of Palestine east of the Jordan river, 70 percent of whose population consists of Palestinian Arabs; (3) the PLO is for "moderation" and "peace," whereas in fact it was and is committed to terrorism and to the extinction of Israel just as much as is the fundamentalist Hamas.

Israel's and America's problem is to turn these illusions around before their devastating consequences become—as they appear very clearly now to be in the process of doing—the "political solution." . . .

LEONARD HORWIN
Beverly Hills, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz's concern about the peace process is certainly justified. From the standpoint of *Realpolitik*, however, Israel's actions are quite understandable. It is, after all, dealing from a position of weakness.

For Israel, the single most critical issue is the continued support of the United States, without which it cannot survive. Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, with Syria a Russian client-state, the strategic importance of Israel was apparent, but since the end of the Gulf war, its value is less certain. Much depends on whether Muslim fundamentalism can be contained. If the government of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt were to be toppled, even a blind State Department would regain its sight. Mr. Podhoretz would do much better directing his jeremiads toward Washington.

STUART J. BACHMAN
Skokie, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is to be hoped that Norman Podhoretz's "Statement" put a good number of readers, Jews and non-Jews alike, back in touch with reality. It was needed. The irreversible fact is that to this date nothing has been publicly broadcast by any Arab Muslim head of state (except Sadat) firmly committing himself to the recognition of legitimate Jewish sovereignty over any part of the state of Israel. The miserable tragedy is that there will be no such pronouncement in unmistakable terms unless it is accompanied by an escape hatch. . . . It has not been politically correct for several decades for a Jewish "spokesman" to say this, but the editor-in-chief of COMMENTARY has rested the case where it belongs. . . .

MYRON S. RUDD
Cincinnati, Ohio

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz's article, which I read with great interest, left me with the reflection that the Israel-Palestine dispute is not the central issue in the Middle East. . . . The Arab-Islamic world is rent by polarities which will not, I fear, be clarified peacefully. Unfortunately, there is no simple solution for Israel, caught in the midst of all this. It ought to be possible to negotiate a practical compromise to the Israel-Palestine problem (if only the Palestinian Arabs agree to be realistic, which I doubt will happen), but about the larger crisis facing the Arab world, I doubt that there is very much Israel can do.

HOWARD H. WALDROP
Ann Arbor, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz's "Statement" was certainly timely and necessary, and I salute COMMENTARY for featuring it so prominently. The reaction to it proved its effectiveness. Through the Israeli embassy in Washington, the Rabin government issued a two-page rejoinder, albeit a rather tame one, to try to blunt Mr. Podhoretz's criticism. Even more significant was the avalanche of criticism from our so-called "leaders." The likes of Henry Siegman, Alexander Schindler, and others accused Mr. Podhoretz of inconsistency since, in the past, he had maintained that American Jews should not criticize Israeli security policies. They claimed that this had muzzled them in their criticism of Likud governments. Actually, however, these critics did carry on sus-

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tained campaigns to undermine Likud in concert with members of the Israeli opposition such as Shimon Peres, Yossi Sarid, Shulamit Aloni, and others.

Mr. Podhoretz has in fact performed a historic service by calling President Clinton's attention to the fact that Americans for Peace Now, which recently twisted the arms of our "leadership" to be admitted to the prestigious Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, is in no way representative of the 85 percent of the Jewish electorate which helped him win in November. Rank-and-file American Jews want a safe, secure, and strong Israel, not the truncated PLO-dominated state which Clinton's advisers in the White House seem to espouse. Thus, Mr. Podhoretz has in one stroke of the pen made COMMENTARY the true spokesman of the American Jewish community, for which he should be amply applauded. . . .

MANFRED R. LEHMANN
Miami Beach, Florida

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As an Israeli and Zionist who has lived in Jerusalem since 1935, with a service record going back to the War of Independence, I am in complete accord with Norman Podhoretz's "Statement."

May I be permitted to add a note of personal apprehension about Rabin's stand on this crucial matter? Rabin won the 1992 national elections, having previously been elected leader of the Labor party; yet Shimon Peres, whom Rabin defeated in that internal power struggle, possesses far more political sagacity and is well known for his skill in maneuvering. . . . Peres will not shrink from pursuing his ploys behind Rabin's back. . . . Now, should it actually happen that Rabin takes the highly dangerous step of agreeing to withdraw from [part of] the Golan Heights, he will have to face civil strife in Israel that will be ten times as fierce as it was in the case of Yamit in the Sinai, which was returned to Egypt. . . . I shudder to think how my grandsons' generation, who now have to perform duties as soldier-policemen, will feel torn between their loyalty to the flag and their compassion for the unfortunate settlers whom the Israeli government settled on the Golan.

I also fear that in such a serious crisis, Rabin might succumb to a debilitating passivity, as he did once before, leaving Peres, his successor, with a free hand to lead Israel to the brink of the abyss.

This reads like a grim scenario, yet, believe me, it is not as unrealistic as some complacent liberals in Israel and America vigorously maintain.

E. WEISSBROT
Jerusalem, Israel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . "A Statement on the Peace Process" is an incisive and thought-provoking article concerning a situation which is becoming more frightening every day to those of us who are concerned about the existence of the state of Israel, the intentions of the Arabs, and the apparent inability of the Rabin government to understand where its actions are leading. One of Begin's mistakes (perhaps his worst) was to think that he could control situations that he initiated (e.g., Camp David, the war in Lebanon). However, the dynamics got out of control. Rabin seems to be under the same delusion. Unfortunately, it can be said of him what was once said of the Bourbons—they learned nothing and forgot nothing.

What Norman Podhoretz has written reflects the thinking of many Israelis, and his sincere reexamination of his position concerning criticism of Israel by American Jews is appreciated.

JAY SHAPIRO
Ginot Shomron, Israel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The critics of "A Statement on the Peace Process" accuse Norman Podhoretz of inconsistency. They assert that he who in the past inveighed against those who publicly attacked Israel's defense policies from the safety of America, has now reversed himself. . . . Is this indeed a case of inconsistency, a reversal of principle? The answer is in the negative.

Though I am not a member of the Labor party or of its partners to the Left, I support Rabin's peace policy. Rabin has a realistic appreciation of Arab intentions as well as of Israel's security needs, and can be relied upon to maintain a steady and firm course. Rabin and his supporters fully realize that by withdrawing from the territories, Israel assumes a risk—a lesser risk, however, than is involved in the continuation of the present deadlock.

Yet rereading Mr. Podhoretz's "Statement" I do not regard it as a critique of Israel's peace policy, but rather as a *cri de coeur*, an expression of anguish at the possible perils inherent in withdrawal from the territories. Mr. Podhoretz realizes that the peace process initiated by Shamir is irreversible, that it is "a trap which it will be hard to escape." Therefore, he does not call for a withdrawal from the peace table. Mr. Podhoretz is wrong in my opinion in his claim that Rabin is prepared to give up the Golan Heights "in exchange for a declaration of nonbelligerence." Nor can one endorse his extensive use of some of Likud's clichés. He is right, however, in pointing out that for the sake of peace, Israel is assuming a calculated risk. Mr. Podhoretz's apprehensions on this score are understandable, and by articulating them he has not reversed his views on noninterference in Israel's foreign policy.

Those who now inveigh against Mr. Podhoretz can rest assured that no parts of his article will be quoted by the traditional detractors of Israel. By alerting public opinion to the dangers arising out of Israel's assuming a risk, Mr. Podhoretz has made public opinion in the U.S. aware of Israel's genuine intent to pursue peace. We can all join him in his prayer that his "apprehensions about the negotiations now going on are ill-founded."

S. ZALMAN ABRAMOV
Jerusalem, Israel

Norman Podhoretz's response to the above letters is included in "Another Statement on the Peace Process," beginning on p. 25.

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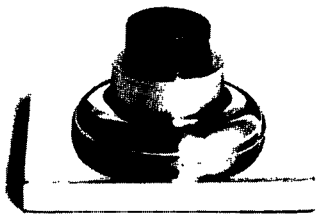

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Another Statement on the Peace Process

> If a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of a little mind (Emerson), then Norman Podhoretz has a mind as big as all outdoors. After insisting for many years that American Jews had "no moral right to criticize Israel's security policies," the editor of the esteemed monthly COMMENTARY has changed his mind and done just that. . . . With consummate gall disguised as touching humility, he has crossed a line he himself drew, erasing it to suit his intellectual convenience.

THUS spake Richard Cohen in a column in the *Washington Post*. He was gloating over my "Statement on the Peace Process" in the April issue of COMMENTARY, where I explained why I had finally decided to go public with my doubts and fears about the latest round of negotiations between Israel and the Arabs.

Cohen was far from alone in hitting me on this point. In a letter to the *New York Times*, Henry Siegman, the executive director of the American Jewish Congress, attacked me, along with two *Times* columnists, A.M. Rosenthal and William Safire, both of whom had supported my position, for "outrageous inconsistencies":

> [These] hawks, . . . and their right-wing colleagues, who carried on endlessly about the immorality of American Jewish criticism of Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, have suddenly and shamelessly discovered the virtues of democratic dissent now that their man is out of office.

And in comparably violent rhetoric, Siegman, in an interview with the Israeli daily newspaper *Ha'aretz*, accused us all of "intolerable hypocrisy."

But not even Siegman's hysterical outbursts matched the charge made, in an op-ed piece in the *New York Times*, by an eminent Labor member of the Israeli parliament, Ephraim Sneh. Similarly referring (though in this case not by name) to Rosenthal, Safire, and me, Sneh went so far as to declare that these "long-time friends" were now actually "turning their backs on Israel."

All this, and more, was in the public prints. But I was also taken to task for inconsistency in private communications as well as in several of the letters sent to COMMENTARY for publication.[1]

To a certain extent, I must admit, I had this coming. After all, I did indeed (as I fully and freely acknowledged in my "Statement") strongly oppose those left-wing American Jews who, during the years when Likud was in power, presumed to lecture the democratically elected government of Israel on matters of physical security. Yet here I was doing the same thing to the Rabin government. How could these people resist the golden opportunity I was now handing them to get some of their own back?

HAVING conceded that much, however, I also have to say (in language more natural to them than to me) that some of them still don't get it. Tony Frank, for one, seems to imagine that I owe an apology to those he calls "supporters of the Israeli Left" like himself because I and my "ideological brethren" have so often "vilified" them as anti-Israel and as self-hating Jews. And Richard Cohen thinks I should have ended my "Statement" with a list (a kind of martyrology, I gather) of all the "dissenters" I have wronged by my "vituperative intolerance" in labeling them as "apostates" and in accusing them of criticizing Israel out of "some base motive, either political or, shall we say, psychoanalytic."

Now I have long since lost count of the number of times it has been alleged that anyone who criticizes Israel is immediately denounced by me as an anti-Semite or a self-hating Jew. But the truth is that I have pinned the anti-Semitic label only on statements (whether made by Jews or non-Jews) which have (1) compared Israel with

[1] See, for example, the ones from Tony Frank, Robert H. Asher and Michael C. Kotzin, and Aaron Goldman (pp. 19-20, above).

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Nazi Germany or with lesser tyrannies; and/or (2) excoriated Israel on the basis of moral and political standards which neither the writer nor anyone else ever applies to any other country.

I have also repeatedly tried to show that Israel has often been attacked in terms that, knowingly or not, represent an adaptation of traditional anti-Semitic canards. In other words, the same defamations which have always been directed by anti-Semites against Jewish individuals and Jewish communities have, suitably translated, now been turned against the Jewish state. Encountering examples of this kind of thing, I have in the interests both of intellectual clarity and moral hygiene felt obliged to call it by its proper name—anti-Semitic.[2]

On the other hand, I have *never* applied the term anti-Semitic to any criticism of Israel, whether coming from Jews or non-Jews, which has been innocent of these pernicious elements, not even when I have disagreed categorically with it. What I *have* said when such attacks have come from Jews is that they strengthen the hand of Israel's enemies, both by bolstering the ideological campaign to delegitimize it and by weakening political support in Washington. In addition, I have raised questions about the moral standing of Jews in the Diaspora to participate in debates on issues literally involving the life and death of their fellow Jews in Israel.

As I carefully made clear in my "Statement," I still believe that the issue of moral standing remains. For that reason alone, I might have been spared the lecture to which I was treated by *Ha'aretz*. There, in an editorial entitled "Heroes at a Safe Distance," I was gratuitously informed that

> . . . Israeli Jews alone . . . and not American Jews are authorized to decide whether the welfare of Israel requires a peace initiative with Syria, since they are the ones who might have to send their sons out to war and it is the Israeli neck that might be bared to Syrian missiles if the Madrid process sinks into deep freeze. Whether the peace initiative requires territorial concessions, and what their scope should be—we alone are entitled to decide.[3]

I thank the editors of *Ha'aretz* for remembering me mine own conception. But as they were in turn reminded a few days later by one of their Israeli readers:

> I cannot recall the editors of *Ha'aretz* opposing attempts to involve Diaspora Jewry in Israel's internal controversies when, during the years of the Likud government, delegations from Peace Now and other battalions of the Left went abroad to mobilize world Jewry against the elected government of Israel.

Evidently I am not the only party to these disputes who is vulnerable to accusations of inconsistency and hypocrisy.

YET if—to repeat—I still have a problem with my standing as a participant in the debate over Israel's security, it also seems to me that distinctions are in order. There is, for instance, all the difference in the world between attacking Israel as an immoral or criminal state, which is what has so often been done by American Jewish leftists, and expressing doubts and anxieties over the prudence of the policies being pursued by the Israeli government, which is what I am trying to do.

Furthermore, as I also emphasized in my "Statement," the political dangers involved in Jewish criticism of Israel's policies have for the moment faded. With the Rabin

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[2] For a detailed analysis based on a large number of specific quotations, see my article "J'Accuse" (COMMENTARY, October 1982). One of these quotations came from Richard Cohen, which is why he includes himself among the victims of my "vituperative intolerance." But here, during the Lebanon war, is what he said: "Maybe the ultimate tragedy of the seemingly nonstop war in the Middle East is that Israel has adopted the morality of its hostile neighbors. Now it bombs cities, killing combatants and noncombatants alike—men as well as women, women as well as children, Palestinians as well as Lebanese." I cited this passage—and two or three more by different writers—to show that, among certain self-professed friends of Israel, "the preponderant emphasis was no longer on the putative damage Israel was doing to itself by its wicked or stupid policies. The focus was now unmistakably on the evils Israel was committing against others." And I went on to observe that "Israel's 'true friends' . . . were liberated by Lebanon to say much more straightforwardly . . . that Israeli intransigence and/or aggressiveness and/or expansionism are the main . . . source of the Arab-Israeli conflict. . . ." For this I owe Cohen an apology?

[3] Incidentally, there is an egregious misquotation in this editorial. According to *Ha'aretz*, I wrote that "If Israel's policies are gaining support like this from the President of the United States, there must be something about them that isn't good for Israel." But of course I neither wrote—nor do I believe—any such thing about President Clinton. What I actually said was that since these policies are meeting with approval by the Syrians, the "moderate" Palestinians, and other enemies of Israel, "it *must* mean that they are not good for Israel."

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government only too eager to pursue the course favored by the Clinton administration, criticizing this course no longer has the effect of increasing pressure on Israel to take steps which it judges to be dangerous to its security. Nor does such criticism fortify those who want to weaken American support for Israel.

Amazingly, however, it is precisely these things of which I, along with Rosenthal and Safire, have been accused. According to Robert J. Lifton, the president of the American Jewish Congress, my "Statement" was part of "an orchestrated campaign to cut American aid to Israel." This charge was repeated by Ephraim Sneh as well as by other members and supporters of the Israeli Labor party both in Israel itself and in the United States. Yet it is, not to put too fine a point on it, a paranoid fantasy.

To begin with, my "Statement" said nothing whatsoever about economic aid. As for the column in which Rosenthal endorsed that "Statement" in the context of a discussion of American aid, he advised there that, "at a time when the U.S. is cutting back on aid to some countries, and facing new costs in the Bosnias and Somalias," Israel should make every effort to do without the nonmilitary component of the American package. This, wrote Rosenthal, would be good for Israel's "pride, independence, and self-confidence," and it also "might inspire Israel to move away faster from the musty Socialist dogma that has held back Israeli governments past and present."

Lifton dismissed such reasoning as a subterfuge. The real purpose behind my "Statement" and Rosenthal's column, he insisted, was to undermine Rabin and pave the way for the return of Likud to power.

I have been told by people in a position to know that Lifton's theory has been accepted by a number of Laborites in Israel (including some in the government) and their supporters here. It is not surprising that they should find it plausible, since that is the very game some of *them* played when Likud was in power and they were in the opposition. Thus, in a dispatch from Israel for the *New York Times* in 1982, Max Frankel reported that opponents of then-Prime Minister Menachem Begin, acknowledging their own political weakness, were hoping that the United States would "help them to topple the Begin government. And to that end," Frankel revealed, "leading opposition figures now risk political oblivion by counseling sharp cuts in America's nonmilitary aid. . . ."

So transparent a case of projection borders on the comical.

But the most extraordinary response to my "Statement" was a "Dear Friend" letter sent out by the embassy of Israel in Washington over the signature of Nimrod Barkan, Minister for Public Affairs. It read:

> You may have already seen Norman Podhoretz's article in the April issue of COMMENTARY which challenges Israel's policy regarding the peace process. In the attached paper, I would like to present our thoughts on the peace imperative.

To the best of my knowledge, the Israel embassy in Washington has never before seen fit to circulate such a refutation, though God knows that columnists like Anthony Lewis and Evans and Novak, not to mention academics like Noam Chomsky and Edward Said, have provided it with innumerable provocations over the years. Perhaps I should be flattered, then, to have become the object of this unprecedented attention (supplemented, by the way, with a meeting of Jewish organizations in the embassy at which one of the topics for discussion was how to counter my "Statement"). But I do not feel flattered, especially as the explanation given privately by an Israeli diplomat to a person who wondered why this highly unusual action should have been taken was that I was out to cut American aid and to help topple Rabin.

Nor do I feel in the least reassured by the rationale offered by the Israel embassy (and echoed in Ephraim Sneh's piece in the *Times*) for the policies about which I expressed doubts and anxieties.

First of all, instead of seriously addressing these doubts and anxieties—which, as is demonstrated by many of the letters on my "Statement," both from American Jews and Israelis, I am not alone in feeling[4]—the document "talks Zionism" (to borrow the contemptuous phrase Israelis themselves apply to nationalistic hot air). Thus, it begins by invoking

[4] See in particular those from Eugene V. Rostow, Kenneth L. Gartner, Sheldon F. Gottlieb, Leonard Horwin, Myron S. Rudd, Howard H. Waldrop, Manfred R. Lehmann, E. Weissbrot, and Jay Shapiro (pp. 20-23, above).

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> the young pioneers who came to Israel in the first decade of the 20th century . . . committed to creating a new Jewish person in their ancient homeland . . . in harmony with himself, the soil, and his neighbors, both Jewish and Arab.

Having conjured up this technicolor vision, the document moves on to credit the current peace process with having "created a new chance for future generations . . . to get back to the task of creating the new Jew the founders dreamed about."

All right, suppose I put aside my uneasiness at this species of unctuous utopian rhetoric. Suppose, too, I swallow my disgust at the insinuation running through both the embassy's apologia and Sneh's article that those of us who fear that the current peace process will lead not to peace but to another military assault against a diminished and weakened Israel can be disposed of with a patronizing sermon about "the horrors of war and the tough conditions of daily life in Israel" (Sneh)—things we are of course too callous to understand. Letting all that ride, let me confine myself to searching out the answers these authoritative spokesmen for the Rabin government give to the two main questions I raised.

The first concerns Syria. Why, I asked, is Syria suddenly so eager to negotiate with Israel, if not because Assad has reason to believe that he can get back most or all of the Golan Heights without even paying the price of a full peace with Israel? Not so, retorts the embassy document:

> Israel will not engage in discussion over the dimensions of withdrawal until the Syrians clarify whether they are prepared for full peace and normalization of relations. . . . Once the details can be worked out, an Israeli withdrawal to secure and recognized borders on the Golan Heights would be an acceptable price to pay to remove Syria from the strategic equation.

So too Sneh:

> A compromise with Syria on the Golan Heights will be based on Israel's security requirements and depend on a revolutionary and profound change of relations between the two countries.

Yet neither the embassy nor Sneh offers so much as a smidgen of evidence that Syria is even remotely ready for such a change. Incredibly, all they cite is (in the embassy's words) a "series of positive public expressions by senior Syrian officials about the peace process." Nor do they explain why, if Syria is so eager to make peace with Israel, it has continued to arm itself with all manner of conventional and nonconventional weapons and has gone on supporting terrorist organizations openly dedicated to the destruction of Israel.

Worse yet, both the embassy and Sneh know—though they do not reveal—that Syria has thus far offered *nothing* beyond a declaration of nonbelligerence in exchange for *complete* Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights. Why then do they keep holding out the hope—nay, the confident expectation—that Syria is preparing to put an acceptable compromise on the table? May it not be because it is *they* who are preparing to offer an acceptable compromise—acceptable, that is, on Assad's terms or something perilously close to those terms (while claiming, of course, that such a deal would amount to "a revolutionary and profound change of relations")?

Let me emphasize as strongly as I possibly can that I am not accusing these people of bad faith, let alone of indifference to the security of their country. God forbid. I am, however, expressing the suspicion that in their war-weariness after so many years of living under siege, and in their mounting anxiety over the future, they are deluding themselves about the chances of achieving the peace for which they so powerfully yearn.

Their anxiety, at any rate, is all too palpable. Desperate enough before, they seem to have been made even more frantic by the new dangers Israel now has to face. These dangers are succinctly and accurately described by the embassy:

> The spread of ballistic-missile technology has expanded the military arena from hundreds to thousands of miles. Moreover, Israel has been swept up in a resurgent historic struggle in the Arab world between radical Islamic fundamentalism and secular nationalism. . . . [And] with a nuclear-armed Iran emerging as a major threat to the entire region, Israeli strategists must contemplate a scenario in which a reborn "Eastern Front" comprising both Syria and Iran confronts Israel.

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So desperate, indeed, are the spokesmen for the Rabin government to find a way of defusing these new dangers that they confuse the desirability of doing so with the existence of an opportunity. Yet contrary to what the embassy imagines, it does not follow from the seriousness of this problem that negotiation is the road to a solution. After all, from Munich in the 30's to the peace accords on Vietnam in the 70's, we have seen "succcessful" negotiations which brought not peace but war.

Falling into the same confusion between need and opportunity, Sneh declares that "The introduction of weapons of mass destruction has enhanced the need to create an environment of peace in order to prevent war." And compounding confusion, he assures us:

> Most Arab states understand that Islamic radicalism, not Zionism, is the ideology that endangers their stability. The new situation creates an opportunity for a new alliance of sane countries against a common extremist threat.

The mind reels. For even if it were true that "sane" Arab countries (among which he includes Syria) no longer opposed Zionism (and there is no evidence that this is the case), surely selling out to Israel (as the fundamentalists would see it) is the last thing in the world that would guarantee their stability. A deal with Israel, even the one favorable to Syria that I fear Israel might conclude, would surely inflame the Islamic radicals and increase their already growing power. And what about Assad's successor? Will he be "sane" too?

THE spokesmen for the Rabin government do just as poorly with the second group of questions I raised. How, I asked, can Israel prevent Palestinian autonomy on the West Bank and Gaza from developing in relatively short order into full-blown statehood? Here I get no answer at all from the embassy except the same illogical leap it makes with regard to Syria: since the problem is so serious, it must be possible to solve it through negotiation. As for Sneh, his answer is a flat and unsupported assertion that "the interim arrangement with the Palestinians will be based on self-government, not on a higher level of sovereignty."

But what is the answer to the argument I put forward that the Palestinians will not settle for autonomy, that they will continue their campaign for complete sovereignty by means of terrorism as well as ideological and political warfare, and that the United States will then come around to endorsing the need for Palestinian statehood? On these points, not even the hint of a response can be found in Sneh, while the embassy takes refuge in moribund illusions about "confederation with Jordan, perhaps with Israel too" that I never thought I would live to see resurrected.

Finally, I search through both Sneh and the embassy document for a refutation of my contention that a new Palestinian state is far less likely to bring harmony and peace than it is to trigger instability and then another war. Such a war, I maintained, fought against a weakened Israel, would give the Arab countries (including the "sane" ones) one more chance to realize their dream—a dream they have not yet abandoned—of wiping the Jewish state off the map.

What do the spokesmen for the Rabin government have to say about that bloodcurdling scenario? Again, nothing; not a word; only another patronizing sermon reminding us that "If the peace process falters, Israel may find itself inexorably bound to a status quo of knives, bullets, and bloodshed."

I WANT to reiterate here what I said in my first "Statement": I fervently hope that I am wrong and that the Rabin government is right. But suppose I am not wrong. What then?

Much as I appreciate S. Zalman Abramov's defense of me in his Letter to the Editor (p. 23, above), I must disappoint him by confessing that, just as Alfred H. Moses guesses (pp. 17-18, above), I would be happy to see the peace process break down.[5] But Mr. Abramov is correct in saying that I do not call for an Israeli withdrawal from the talks, since I am well aware that such a call would in effect advise Israel to isolate itself totally and to bring the wrath of Washington down upon its head.

[5] For the record, I would remind Mr. Moses that I *did* criticize the peace process, and in much the same terms, when Shamir was in office ("America and Israel: An Ominous Change," COMMENTARY, January 1992). On the substance, then, I have not been inconsistent at all. But in the past I was able to confine my criticisms entirely to the Bush administration because then it was American pressures that were responsible for pushing Israel in what I considered a perilous direction.

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On the other hand, since I regard the peace process as a great danger to Israel, I would have been relieved if the Palestinians had made good on their refusal to return to the table this past April, and the negotiations had thereby ended without too much political damage to Israel. But now that the Palestinians are breaking their famous pattern of never missing an opportunity to miss an opportunity, Israel can no longer rely on its enemies to save it.

In short, as Mr. Moses also guesses, my view is that the safest course for Israel is to buy as much time as possible by stalling as much as possible. I do not dispute Mr. Moses's contention that this course also risks the erosion and conceivably even the loss of American support. But if my analysis is sound, the peace process carries even greater risks.

Even aside from the problem of American support, there are those who feel that the status quo is intolerable. Mr. Moses is one, and another is Jacob Amir (who, in his moving letter [pp. 18-19, above] makes the case for Palestinian statehood in a way that gives me pause and avoids lending aid and comfort to Israel's enemies).

Well, unpleasant and uncomfortable the status quo certainly is, but compared to what is it intolerable? I remember hearing that the status quo in Iran under the Shah was intolerable, but then came the Ayatollah Khomeini; I remember hearing that the status quo in South Vietnam under Thieu was intolerable, but then came the Communists; I remember hearing that the status quo in Cambodia under Lon Nol was intolerable, but then came the Khmer Rouge. The status quo of "knives, bullets, and bloodshed" conjured up by the embassy is no picnic. But as I tried to show in my first "Statement," the calamities that a Lebanonized Palestinian state would unleash—one likely scenario being a civil war between the PLO and Hamas, followed by Syrian intervention, followed by another Arab-Israeli war—would be far, far worse.

Does this mean that the Arab war against the Jewish state will go on forever? Not necessarily, but it does mean that this war can be called off only by the party that started it—the Arabs. As things now stand, they show no convincing sign of a willingness to do anything but get land at the bargaining table which they have been unable to win on the battlefield. And the growing strength of Islamic radicalism only makes matters even less conducive to peace than they were before. Nor, as I have already indicated, do I agree with Mr. Moses that "progress in the peace process bolsters moderate forces." Just the opposite.

NEVERTHELESS, we who with our own eyes have seen the collapse of Communism know that great political miracles can occur. Therefore we have no right to rule out the possibility that a miracle will also occur in the Arab world, taking the form of a new political order which would truly be willing to live in peace with Israel. With such an Arab world, Israel could enter safely into arrangements that would be mortally dangerous today. The instructive analogy here is the arms-control agreements the United States can now make with a post-Communist Russia that it would have been reckless to conclude with a totalitarian Soviet Union.

Pursuing that analogy, I would say that those Israelis who today wish to rush into agreements with Syria and the Palestinians are comparable to the Americans who kept telling us and themselves that Khrushchev or Brezhnev or Andropov was eager to end the cold war and that it was the U.S. which stood in the way of a peaceful settlement. Like those Americans, the Israeli doves of today who are now in power in Jerusalem and who imagine that both Syria and the Palestinians are on the brink of a "revolutionary" change in their relations with Israel, are, in my judgment, guilty of the Jewish sin of "forcing the end." They are acting, that is, as though the era of messianic deliverance were already here, and in doing so they are courting disaster.

The upshot is that Israel's security—and its survival—can in my judgment best be served by holding steady and dragging the peace process out for as long as it takes for the Arab world to undergo the "revolutionary" change that Sneh imagines has already all but occurred in Syria. Since, however, I do not expect the Rabin government to follow my advice, I will conclude this second "Statement" as I did the first—by praying with all my heart and all my soul and all my might that my analysis is wrong and that the Rabin government and its spokesmen are right.

—NORMAN PODHORETZ

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Boris Yeltsin's Hollow Victory

Vladimir Bukovsky

THE referendum held in Russia this past April has left President Boris Yeltsin in office, which is better than his defeat would have been, but it has done nothing to resolve the ongoing crisis which has caused so much panic both in Western capitals and in Russia itself.

A few months ago, when the crisis once again hit the news, some hastened to announce what had always been expected and feared, yet would, it had simultaneously been hoped, be averted by a miracle: the death of the fragile democratic system which had been born in Russia after the failed coup of August 1991, the fall of Mikhail Gorbachev, and the accession of Boris Yeltsin to power. Others argued that democracy in Russia had been stillborn right from the start, or even that it had never quite been a democracy. Most even likened the change to what had happened 75 years earlier, when the Provisional Government, which had taken power after the Czar's abdication, was overthrown by the Bolsheviks.

Needless to say, historical parallels are more often misleading than enlightening. While Yeltsin's leadership could indeed be compared with the Provisional Government of 1917, being weak and indecisive, the present-day "Bolsheviks" are but a pale copy of Lenin's professional revolutionaries. They are the defeated forces of the past, not the harbingers of the future.

What, then, has been happening in Moscow? Nothing much, in my view, except that it has become apparent even to Yeltsin's supporters that they have wasted the few opportunities offered by the August 1991 godsend.

The formidable problems of transition from decades of Communist totalitarianism to a market economy and democracy are obvious. Under Communism both agriculture and industry were monopolistic and inefficient in their very design; there was a huge military-industrial complex; there was a lack of investment capital; there were depleted resources; and there were masses of low-skilled laborers who had never worked productively in their lives. Clearly, any attempt, no matter how gradual and cautious, to restructure an economy like this was bound to create enormous turmoil, reduce the living standards of a sizable majority, and generate a huge wave of social discontent. No elected government on earth would likely survive such a reform, as no elected government could have created such an economy in the first place.

Moreover, emerging from the totalitarian nightmare, Russia had no political or social structures capable of stabilizing it in transition except those created by the totalitarian system itself and tainted by it. The new institutions, although numerous and noisy, were tiny and weak to the point of merely symbolic existence. They were no match for the well-entrenched, all-pervasive structures left over from the old regime and interconnected into a virtual mafia; they were even too small to replace the governing apparatus. Hence the old ruling bureaucracy, the *nomenklatura*—eighteen million strong according to some estimates and united by its vested interests, its connections with the West, its accumulated wealth, and its complicity in the crimes of the past—remained in control of all the executive functions of the presumably new democratic state.

Add to all this endless ethnic conflicts, fantastic corruption, skyrocketing crime rates, and the general apathy of a demoralized population, and the chances of a successful transition became all but impossible.

Also, let us not forget the less than friendly attitude of the West to the attempt at establishing democracy in the former Soviet Union. While those who, like Gorbachev and his lot, strove to rescue the moribund Communist system and the equally doomed Union were given every assistance (including financial support to the tune of $45 billion!), their democratic opponents—including Yeltsin—were vilified right from the start as "unpredictable," "unbalanced," or even "dangerous." This only served to prolong the country's agony, and to make the task of transition more and more difficult.

Yet formidable as all these obstacles were, there might still have been a chance of success if they had not been reinforced by a series of colossal blunders ironically made by Yeltsin and his team.

EVEN before the coup, and certainly by the end of 1990, it had become abundantly clear that the Soviet regime was heading for a catastrophe. While Gorbachev's pere-

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stroika had failed to deliver what was expected of it by its architects, it did unleash forces which were eroding the foundations of the regime. The Soviet empire was in turmoil, and all the "captive nations" were rising up and demanding independence. In Russia itself, elections at all levels, restricted and manipulated though they were, showed a clear vote of no confidence in the Communist party. A wave of strikes was gathering momentum, threatening to grow into a general strike and to lead to the formation of a Solidarity-type labor union.

Clearly, a program of reform that did not go far enough for economic revival was going too far for the regime's political survival; what was intended as a limited within-the-system readjustment was bidding fair to develop into a popular revolution.

But it was also becoming clear that the regime was prepared to defend itself. Between 1988 and the end of 1989, the most radical parts of perestroika, such as the deregulation of prices and further decentralization, were suspended. New laws were hastily introduced curbing freedom of assembly, limiting freedom of the press, restricting cooperatives, and, above all, extending to the army the power of the police. Then came new emergency laws banning strikes, more restrictions on cooperatives, and a decision to increase the number of internal troops. Everything seemed ready for a crackdown, and indeed, in Tbilisi (1989) and Baku (1990), Gorbachev showed that he was quite prepared to spill blood even in response to peaceful political developments which threatened to evolve into independence.

In December 1990, Gorbachev replaced most of his reform-minded associates with obvious thugs. He then proceeded to curtail glasnost, order a campaign against private business activity, institute measures that robbed old-age pensioners of their life savings, and shed yet more blood, this time in the Baltic states.

In February 1991, Yeltsin, who had recently quit the Communist party, went on television with a "declaration of war on the government." This galvanized the country. By March, practically all coal mines were paralyzed by strikes, and demonstrations in the large cities were growing more massive every day. In Moscow half-a-million people defied the ban on demonstrations despite a display of military force; not even 50,000 of the best troops summoned to the city could frighten them any longer.

After that the tidal wave of revolution seemed to be unstoppable. In April, the whole of Byelorussia—a nation not previously known for its rebellious spirit—went on strike, and all indications were that Ukraine was about to follow suit. Clearly, the country was ready and eager to break the shackles of Communism. All it needed was a leader of national stature, equally eager to carry it into battle.

This was a crucial moment in the history of the Soviet Union, one which will be studied by scholars in the years to come. For the first time in almost 75 years of ruthless Communist rule, the people were openly challenging the regime in a nonviolent but forceful way. This popular impulse, uniting all nations and social groups in a determination to regain their dignity and liberate *themselves*, was priceless. It meant that the preconditions for building a new society and a true democracy were there.

But these preconditions, though necessary, were not sufficient. The oppositional structures, weak and inexperienced as they were in their emergence after 75 years of repression, needed to go through the process of struggle with the old regime if they were to grow into a real political force capable of displacing the *nomenklatura* at all levels. Such a struggle would bring forward the most capable organizers, the real leaders, in every district, at every workplace, thereby creating a genuine political alternative. Without this process there could be no structural support for a new democratic system and no systematic change in the country.

Yet just as things were coming to a crunch in April 1991, Yeltsin, by now the only credible leader of the opposition, lost heart and—perhaps following his instincts as a lifelong bureaucrat—entered into a compromise with Gorbachev which actually betrayed his most faithful followers, the coal miners. Worse yet, instead of relying on his popular base and making a clean break with the past, Yeltsin allied himself with the "liberal" part of the *nomenklatura*, creating what was later called a Center-Left coalition. Ironically, in doing this he also nominated his future enemy Aleksander Rutskoi to be his running mate in the June presidential elections—which he would, of course, go on to win, becoming the first freely elected President of Russia—and forced a reluctant Supreme Soviet to choose yet another future enemy, Ruslan Khasbulatov, as its chairman.

However, in all fairness to Yeltsin, it must be added that, although his was definitely the decisive voice in April, he was by no means alone in being frightened by the prospect of confrontation. Most of the democratic forces were scared too, and so was a sizable portion of the intellectuals of Moscow. Only a few dared to call for a general strike or a campaign of civil disobedience. The rest pointed to the danger of a crackdown (as if it had not already started in January), or a military coup with its inevitable bloodbath, or even argued—typically for intellectuals—that the *people* were not ready to answer such a call (as if strikes were not spreading already like wildfire). The best course, they said, was to follow the Polish example of the "round-table agreement" between Solidarity and the Communists (as if that had not been a notorious mistake already recognized as such by the Poles themselves).

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In short, the country was ready to fight for democracy, but the elites preferred a cozy cohabitation with the Communists to the power of the people, by the people, for the people. Going along with this policy was Yeltsin's first major blunder.

NEVERTHELESS, and as if to confirm an old notion that reality is the best scriptwriter of the most improbable scenarios, fate gave Yeltsin and his supporters one last chance: the so-called August coup, which turned out to be a blessing in disguise because it precipitated the collapse of the Communist system. One can only guess how long the demoralizing uncertainty of those days would otherwise have dragged on, with intellectuals exercising their tongues about the wisdom of a round-table agreement and the horrors of confrontation, and the West frantically trying to save its dear friend Gorby. But as if to shame them all, the Evil Empire decided to strike back and then fell apart, revealing how rotten it really was.

So, all of a sudden, there was an opportunity to make up for past indecision. But taking advantage of this opportunity required very quick and radical action while the *nomenklatura* was still shellshocked and popular enthusiasm was at its height. And indeed, Yeltsin's team was magnificent throughout the coup as well as for a few days after it. Undoubtedly, climbing on a tank in front of his White House and appealing to the country was Yeltsin's finest hour, just as, a few days later, signing a decree banning the Communist party of the Soviet Union was the most significant act of his life.

But that was it. For the next 100 days, as if paralyzed by his unexpected victory, he did absolutely nothing of any importance.

Although its backbone had been broken, the old regime was still very much alive. As in 1917, the August revolution had triumphed in the center, mostly in the few big cities, while the provinces remained untouched. The coup collapsed so quickly that the democratic forces had no time to consolidate and get rid of the local bosses. In theory the democrats were the party in power, but in reality they had no power in the provinces—and Yeltsin did nothing to change this.

Even in the center, where Yeltsin's own power had initially been unchallenged, it was not enough just to seal the party's headquarters and to confiscate its property. The other parts of the totalitarian machinery needed to be dismantled as quickly as possible, including the KGB, with its intricate system of secret agents; the monstrously oversized army, with its all too powerful industrial base; and the ministries, which still controlled every aspect of production and distribution. Above all, the very essence of the Communist regime should have been delegitimized once and for all by a systematic exposure of its crimes, preferably in an open trial or a public inquiry where the relevant documents from the party and the KGB archives could have been presented and publicized through the media.

In other words, the task was to finish off the old structures of power and to create new ones. Needless to say, this required ending Yeltsin's alliance with the "liberal" sector of the *nomenklatura* through new parliamentary elections. All this, and much more, could easily have been done in the first 100 days after the August coup, when the frightened *nomenklatura* could offer no resistance and Yeltsin's personal popularity was at its highest point.

For example, the most painful yet unavoidable reforms could and should have been inaugurated right from the start—first and foremost, a sweeping privatization of the simplest state property, such as housing, services, retail and wholesale trade. This move alone would have broadened the social base of Yeltsin's power, while simultaneously establishing the key principle of private property without which no further market reforms were possible. Besides, introducing this principle would have meant replacing the collapsing system of centralized state distribution—the main reason for shortages and the main source of corruption—with a normal market distribution. And it also would have provided a sizable portion of the population with an instant reward, a tangible result of the revolution.

These measures, combined with a purge of the *nomenklatura* and with a newly elected Russian legislature, would have brought new people into positions of power, while removing the main obstacle to reform—the old legislature Gorbachev had invented precisely in order to slow down the pace of change. Instead of begging his enemies to vote themselves out of existence by adopting a new constitution and a law on the privatization of land, which is what he did, Yeltsin could have created a new instrument of reform for himself. At the very least, this would have made the post-August changes irreversible and it would also have significantly strengthened his own position.

THEN, too, there was an urgent need to extricate Russia from its imperial past, and here again Yeltsin was too hesitant, if not ambiguous. Although he finally delivered the *coup de grâce* to the Union in December 1991, his vision of Russia's future relations with the newly independent republics was less than clear, opening the way to potential conflicts.

Thus, on the one hand, the republics were proclaimed independent and recognized as such in Moscow, but on the other hand, Russia claimed to be the "legal heir" of the Soviet Union, with responsibility for maintaining peace in the former empire. This was another colossal blunder. Not only did it make the Russian people legally responsible for the crimes of Communism—of which they had been the biggest and longest-suffering victims; it also made impossible any sig-

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nificant reform of the huge Soviet armed forces, scattered as they were across the former empire and very often engaged in policing local ethnic conflicts.

Worse yet, local warring parties to the numerous ethnic conflicts viewed the Soviet troops stationed in their midst either as a source of military supplies or as a potential ally (should they manage to provoke the army's anger against their opponents in the conflict). More often than not, local Russian settlers would be made hostages in this cruel game. This, in turn, fueled nationalist feelings in Russia, and also added to its economic troubles by generating a stream of refugees to the homeland.

Finally, the army commanders in the areas of conflict were often left to follow their own political instincts, and those instincts were not necessarily democratically oriented. If nothing else, it was in their best interest to prolong the conflicts as much as possible because this was perceived as the only guarantee against a reduction of the armed forces and other unpleasant reforms.

The only way to avoid these potentially explosive problems would have been a refusal by Yeltsin right from the start to be dragged into any conflicts outside of Russia, a quick withdrawal of all troops from non-Russian territories, and a thorough restructuring of the armed forces. All this could have been achieved by a unilateral withdrawal of Russia from the Union immediately after the August coup. But Yeltsin took no such step.

OF COURSE, this is not to say that Yeltsin could have pushed through all these reforms in the remaining months of 1991. But he certainly could and should have launched them in those first 100 days, thereby establishing the fundamental lines of his policy. Instead, all he did was shift and shuffle the old bureaucratic deck.

As a result, the bureaucracy multiplied and took over every sphere of the government, rendering it uncontrollable and incredibly corrupt. Indeed, the absence of a government-sponsored radical program of privatization gave the bureaucracy a chance to "privatize" in its own way. Former party functionaries, who of course all turned out to be "democrats" now, quickly became "businessmen" as well, grabbing many desirable state-owned properties in this de-facto "privatization." Black-market operators and outright criminals got the rest. Not only did this generate public resentment, it also gave a bad name to the whole idea of a market economy.

Thanks to its new financial base and Yeltsin's political paralysis, the reviving *nomenklatura* was able to regroup and to work out a new strategy, this time a completely "democratic" one. There was no need for coups and conspiracies. All the old Communists had to do was to act as a "democratic" opposition defending the interests of ordinary people, while at the same time blocking or sabotaging any further reforms. Since they dominated both the executive and the legislative branches of the government, they were bound to win this new game of "democracy."

As for the small and disunited democratic forces, finding themselves in a no-win situation, they could only continue to split and squabble. They could not openly oppose Yeltsin for fear of playing into the hands of the Communists, yet they could not support him either without alienating their grass-roots followers. In the end, some joined the government, others dropped out of politics altogether, and a minority joined the ranks of the disillusioned multitudes who felt betrayed and robbed of the fruits of their revolution.

Indeed, what else could they feel, seeing exactly the same party bureaucrats sitting in the same offices holding the same jobs and enjoying the same privileges as they had before August? Which Yeltsin were they supposed to support: the one who climbed a tank now and then to declare war on the *nomenklatura*, or the one who, between his declarations of war, advocated compromising with the *nomenklatura*?

Only 100 days after its victory, then, Yeltsin's government—with its inability to solve the main problems, its lack of supporting political structures, and its dwindling popularity—was looking more and more like the Provisional Government of 1917.

AS IF ALL these blunders were not enough for one man to commit in a few short months, Yeltsin added yet another: without resolving the problem of political power in the country, and without first establishing the institution of private property, he appointed a certain Yegor Gaidar to introduce a market economy.

Ironically, very much like Mikhail Gorbachev before him, this new Russian star was immediately acclaimed in the West as a young, energetic crusader for the market economy, while in reality being an offspring of the old *nomenklatura* deadwood. His grandfather, a famous Soviet children's writer, made his name by glorifying the Bolshevik Revolution; his father, a Soviet admiral, followed family tradition by glorifying the bravery of the Soviet army in Afghanistan. Needless to say, with so prominent a revolutionary pedigree, Gaidar the 3rd enjoyed a spectacular professional career in different think tanks of the Central Committee, such as its main theoretical magazine *Kommunist*, and later became the economics editor of the newspaper *Pravda*. Surely, with such impeccable credentials as a Westernizer, he was the obvious choice for prime minister of Russia.

His team, too, consisted of young, energetic, liberal-minded children of the *nomenklatura* who had spent their lives in prestigious research institutes. No doubt under Brezhnev they had even been perceived as somewhat rebellious for trying

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to persuade the old dogmatic Central Committee that socialism could be improved upon with some elements of a market economy. I suspect they may even as students have secretly read Milton Friedman and F.A. Hayek. The trouble was, however, that their knowledge of economic life was entirely bookish, as they had never lived the life of an ordinary human being either under socialism or under capitalism.

It was these radical reformers who persuaded Yeltsin to adopt the Polish model of "shock therapy," and to start the whole process with the "liberalization of prices." They firmly believed that this, combined with tight monetary and fiscal policies, would enable them to make the ruble convertible by the summer of 1992 and to begin privatization by the fall. After all, that was what had happened in Poland, was it not?

The result was a catastrophe. The reforms, welcomed in the West as courageous, were in truth downright stupid because they totally ignored a huge difference between the Russian and Polish economies. Polish agriculture had never been collectivized and was therefore always based on private farming; moreover, both retail and wholesale trade had already existed in Poland for decades. Accordingly, shock therapy there stimulated competition in the private sector (employing about one-third of the total workforce), and after an initial jump of some 60 percent, prices stabilized within a few months.

Russia, in sharp contrast, had no private producers or traders, no private sector whatsoever, not even a legal basis for private property. Under these circumstances there was no competition to be stimulated: monopolistic producers could safely reduce their production and fix prices at any level. Not surprisingly, production, including in agriculture, dropped everywhere by 20-30 percent, and prices jumped *20 times*, and continued to go up.

At the same time, Gaidar's tight monetary and fiscal policies—he had learned *something* from Friedman's books—severely discouraged any private initiative. With income taxes on a Swedish scale (federal and local taxes combined could reach 90 percent), and an absence of cheap credit, any enterprising entrepreneur was promptly driven underground, where shady deals were made only in cash (to the utter delight of the racketeers).

Thus was private initiative directed into wasteful activity instead of being harnessed to a productive market economy. Such business activity did not accumulate capital, did not engage in competition, did not create new jobs or new products; it did not even contribute its share of taxes. But it did fuel inflation, crime, and a popular hatred of "ugly capitalism."

Another difference from Poland was that the bulk of Russian manufacturing was not consumer-oriented but state-controlled heavy industry, some 30-40 percent of which was related to military production. Any market reform was bound to affect it dramatically, generating a huge wave of unemployment. Now, since no government can survive unemployment at such a level, least of all a government as feeble as Yeltsin's, market reforms in Russia needed to be accompanied by a very rapid development of the private sector, capable of creating new jobs. Even that might have been insufficient, and a program of public works, like the one under Roosevelt in the United States, should have been prepared.

But neither of these points was taken into account. So, suddenly, a combination of Gaidar's tight monetarism, staggering inflation, and the underground cash economy brought about a liquidity crisis. To put it in plain language, the Russian economy went bankrupt. Enterprises could not pay for raw materials, for energy, for services, for products provided by suppliers; workers were not paid their wages for several months. (When a nuclear-weapons factory in Siberia went on strike, Yeltsin personally had to bring the overdue wages in his plane.)

By the summer of 1992, instead of the promised convertible ruble, the government had to print the ordinary one in astronomical numbers. Under pressure from furious legislators, Yeltsin had to return to massive subsidies of industry and to periodic indexation of wages and pensions—that is, to Gorbachev's old economic "policy" of a printing press and of begging additional credits in the West.

To be sure, there was still plenty of talk about reform, and even a half-hearted attempt at "privatization" in the fall, "as planned." The privatization vouchers, with a face value of 10,000 rubles each, were duly printed and distributed to every Russian citizen. But the popular response was lukewarm: no one knew what sort of state property would be available for the vouchers. Would it be something useful, like land or housing, or would it be a tiny piece of a gigantic and rusty factory which would never turn a profit?

Meanwhile, the vouchers simply added yet another trillion or so to the already uncontrollable inflation as they went into circulation and became yet another legal tender. By the end of 1992, their market price had dropped to 2,000 rubles apiece.

Thus ended Gaidar's "market reform," leaving people twenty times poorer, disillusioned, and angry. Such a reform could not have served the Communists better: though the country still had neither democracy nor a market economy, both ideas were now utterly discredited.

CLEARLY, new forces, new people—preferably, a new generation—will have to enter the Russian political scene if the country is to survive. Yet there are no new forces, and the existing ones are not strong enough to resolve the crisis.

This is exactly the reason that none of the most commonly suggested scenarios of the Russian

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future—a Bolshevik coup of the 1917 type; a Weimar-type Republic with a new Hitler emerging out of its chaos; a military coup of the Pinochet-type in Chile; or an all-out civil war as in the former Yugoslavia—is likely to happen. For if there were forces capable of carrying out any of those scenarios, they would have won long ago, or at least they would have manifested themselves in a convincing way.

Take, for example, the present-day "Bolsheviks": are they eager to assume the responsibility of absolute power? Far from it. They prefer Yeltsin and his lot to bear responsibility while they go on lining their pockets.

Or look at the Russian nationalists, publicized in the West as if they were just about to storm the Kremlin. Where are their "Black Hundreds"? In all these years of turmoil and with all the trappings of a Weimar Republic in evidence, they have failed to elect a single deputy to even a local Soviet anywhere in the country. In truth, they are hardly more numerous than the skinheads in any European country. This is why they had to ally themselves with the Communists in what became known as a "brown-red coalition": both partners of this unhappy marriage recognize that they are too weak to survive alone.

Military dictatorship is an even less likely scenario. Long gone are the days when the army was a monolithic force, forged by iron discipline into an iron fist of the party. Today's Russian army is being torn apart by its internal problems and conflicts. The conscripts want to go home, the junior officers want better housing and salaries, and only the generals want to play soldier. Most of the local commanders prefer to keep their troops locked up in the barracks. One dreads even to think what would happen if, indeed, some dotty general attempted a coup: whom this marauding gang of an army would shoot at is anyone's guess.

Besides, none of the above-mentioned forces has the slightest idea of how to solve the country's problems. Their usual demagoguery aside, the Communists know there is no way back to five-year plans and campaigns of "socialist competition." The most extreme nationalists know that there is no way back to empire without a prolonged and bloody war for which Russia has no strength. And, after bungling their reforms, the democrats have no clear answers, either.

As the center remains paralyzed, with tiny groups of politicians in Moscow deadlocked in their squabbles, and with the government printing more and more money, the provinces are very likely to look for their own solutions. Actually, the fragmentation of Russia proper has already started, and not necessarily along the ethnic cracks. Some districts, in their desperate quest for stability, have introduced local currency as a buffer against the inflated ruble; others are openly contemplating a separation from the Russian Federation. And the army may follow their lead, providing regional politicians with the muscle and, in return, being provided with the supplies Moscow can no longer give it.

Perhaps this is as it should be in a state which was historically built from top to bottom rather than from the bottom to the top. Indeed, can anyone explain why Siberia, still fabulously rich in some resources, should continue to suffer just because, nine time zones away, in far-off Moscow, some fools are bickering over obscure constitutional subtleties? What did Moscow ever give to Siberia except orders, punishment, taxation, and now hyperinflation?

Undoubtedly, the drive for sovereignty was the most powerful force of the latest Russian revolution, and not only among the different ethnic groups. In fact, the idea of sovereignty may have represented the only popular understanding of freedom in the overcentralized totalitarian state—a desire to be separated from it by some kind of border, preferably by an iron curtain. It was this desire, and not a handful of former Communists-turned-democrats, that effectively finished off totalitarian control.

Obviously, if the country breaks apart, even its large fragments will be unable to maintain the national infrastructure in communications, transportation, energy, to say nothing of the safety of nuclear or chemical facilities. Nor will they be able to maintain the Academy of Science with its research institutes, or the artistic culture accumulated in the last couple of centuries.

Furthermore, we cannot predict how those fragments of Russia will be governed: by elected parliaments or by warlords? Will they live peacefully with one another, or will they fight for oil fields and gold resources? And if they fight, what sort of weapons are they going to use?

IN SUM, we are faced with all kinds of as yet unanswerable questions. And the biggest among them is: what can we do about it? So far as the West is concerned, we do have an answer—next to nothing. Even today, no matter how much it wants to help Yeltsin, a few billion dollars more will not make much difference, particularly as most of this sum will be embezzled by the corrupt Russian bureaucracy anyway. And when the country disintegrates, the West will be even less able to help.

The only chance of renewal rests with the younger generations which have remained completely inactive and apolitical throughout the current revolution—a fact without precedent in the world's history. Most of these young people are so mistrustful of their elders that the overwhelming majority of them—some 70 percent according to the opinion polls—want simply to emigrate. Unless a way can be found to wake them up, to give them a hope and a cause, there will be no hope for Russia either.

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What Is Moral, and How Do We Know It?

James Q. Wilson

ALMOST every important tendency in modern thought has questioned the possibility of making moral judgments. Analytical philosophy asserts that moral statements are expressions of emotion lacking any rational or scientific basis. Marxism derides morality and religion as "phantoms formed in the human brain," "ideological reflexes" that are, at best, mere sublimates of material circumstances. Nietzsche writes dismissively that morality is but the herd instinct of the individual. Existentialists argue that man must choose his values without having any sure compass by which to guide those choices. Cultural anthropology as practiced by many of its most renowned scholars claims that amid the exotic diversity of human life there can be found no universal laws of right conduct. In 1906, the sociologist William Graham Sumner declared that "the mores can make anything right"; 30 years later, the anthropologist Ruth Benedict popularized the phrase "cultural relativism." All of science seems the enemy of moral confidence, because its method requires that we separate factual statements, which can be verified, from "value" statements, which cannot.

It is not easy to know how greatly these intellectual currents have affected the behavior of ordinary people. I am inclined to think that most people most of the time live lives of ordinary decency as they struggle to raise children, earn a living, and retain the respect of their friends. But we cannot dismiss the possibility that what many intellectuals have come to discredit some people will come to ignore. If morality is thought to be nothing but convention or artifice, then it will occur to those persons who are weakly attached to society and its rules that they are free to act as they wish provided they can get away with it. And if they would have broken the rules anyway, the relativism of our age makes it easier for them to justify their action by the claim that the rules are arbitrary enactments.

I wish to argue for an older view of human nature, one that assumes that people are naturally endowed with certain moral sentiments. We have a peculiar, fragile, but persistent disposition to make moral judgments, and we generally regard people who lack this disposition to be less than human. Despite our wars, crimes, envies, snobberies, fanaticisms, and persecutions, there is to be found a desire not only for praise but for praiseworthiness, for fair dealings as well as for good deals, for honor as well as for advantage. These desires become evident when we think disinterestedly about ourselves or others.

TO SAY that there exists a natural moral sense (or, more accurately, several moral senses) is to say that there are aspects of our moral life that are universal, a statement that serious thinkers from Aristotle to Adam Smith had no trouble in accepting. In this view, cultural diversity, though vast, exotic, and bewildering, is not the whole story. In modern times, historians, philosophers, and anthropologists have sought for scientific evidence by which the existence of such universals could be proved; a few claim to have found it, but most feel that they have not. This has left most scholars skeptical about whether anything of universal significance can be said about our moral life. The box score has been something like this: Relativists 10, Universalists 1.

I am reckless enough to think that many conducting this search have looked in the wrong places for the wrong things because they have sought for universal *rules* rather than universal *dispositions.* It would be astonishing if many of the rules by which men lived were everywhere the same, since rules (or customs) reflect the adjustment of moral sensibilities to the realities of economic circumstances, social structures, and family systems. Hence one should not be surprised to find that the great variety of these conditions has produced an equally great variety in the rules by which they are regulated. Even so, some universal rules have been discovered: those against incest, for example, or against homicide in the absence of defined excusing conditions.

To find what is universal about human nature, we must look behind the rules and the circumstances that shape them to discover what funda-

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mental dispositions, if any, animate them all in common. If such universal dispositions exist, we would expect them to be so obvious that travelers would either take them for granted or overlook them in preference to whatever is novel or exotic.

And so, indeed, it turns out to be with the most fundamental of those dispositions: the affection a parent, especially a mother, bears for its child and the desire to please that the child brings to this encounter. Out of the universal attachment between child and parent, the former begins to develop a sense of empathy and fairness, to learn self-control, and to acquire a conscience that makes him behave dutifully, at least with respect to some matters. Those dispositions are then extended to other people (and often to other species) to the degree that these others are thought to share in the traits we find in our families.

That last step is the most problematic, and as a consequence is far from common. Many cultures—especially those organized around clans and lineages rather than independent nuclear families based on consensual marriages and private property—rarely extend the moral sense, except in the most abstract or conditional way, to other peoples.

Because our moral senses are at origin parochial and easily blunted by even trivial differences between what we think of as familiar and what we define as strange, it is not hard to explain why there is so much misery in the world, and it is also easy to understand why so many people deny the existence of a moral sense at all. How can there be a moral sense if everywhere we find cruelty and combat, sometimes on a monstrous scale?

One rather paradoxical answer is that man's attacks against his fellow man reveal his moral sense because they express his social nature. Contrary to Freud, it is not simply their innate aggressiveness that leads men to engage in battles against their rivals; contrary to Hobbes, it is not only to control their innate wildness that men create governments. Men are less likely to fight alone against one other person than to fight in groups against other groups. It is the desire to earn or retain the respect and good will of their fellows that keeps soldiers fighting even against fearsome odds, leads men to accept even the more distorted or implausible judgments of their peers, and persuades many of us to devalue the beliefs and claims of outsiders.

We all, I believe, understand this when we think of families sticking together against interlopers, friends banding together against strangers, and soldiers standing fast against enemies. But the affiliative drive is so powerful that it embraces people unrelated and even unknown to us. Patriotic nationalism and athletic-team loyalties are obvious examples, but the most important case—most important because it animates so much of history right down to the present—is ethnic identity.

We may bemoan what we sometimes think of as the "senseless" violence attendant on the conflicts that arise out of ethnic identity. But imagine a world in which people attached no significance to any larger social entity than themselves and their immediate families. Can we suppose that in such a world there would be any enlarged sense of duty, any willingness to sacrifice oneself for the benefit of others, or even much willingness to cooperate on risky tasks for material gain?

The political scientist Edward C. Banfield has portrayed a world something like this in his account of the peasants living in the southern Italian village of Montegrano (a pseudonym), where the unwillingness of people to cooperate in any joint endeavors kept them in a condition of the most extreme poverty and backwardness.

The reluctance of the Montegranese to cooperate was not the product of ignorance (many of the peasants were quite well-informed about local affairs), of a lack of resources (other peoples just as poorly endowed have created bustling economies), or of political oppression (they were free to organize, vote, and complain, but few did). The lack of cooperative effort, Banfield argued, was chiefly the result of a culture that made people almost entirely preoccupied with their families' short-run material interest and led them to assume that everybody else would do likewise. Under these circumstances, there was no prospect of collective effort on behalf of distant or intangible goals. Whatever its source, this ethos of "amoral familism" prevented people from identifying and affiliating with any group larger than the nuclear family.

Yet if the Montegranese had acquired larger patterns of identification and affiliation such that common endeavors without immediate material benefit became possible, they would also, I suspect, have acquired a set of relationships binding them together against people who were dissimilar on a larger scale than the family: residents of other villages, northern Italians, non-Catholics, or whatever. Affiliation requires boundaries; a "we" must be defined on some basis if there are to be any obligations to it; and once there is a "we," there will be a "they." Truly parochial people may not engage in "senseless violence," but then they may not engage in "senseless cooperation," either.

Note, however, that even in Montegrano, adults cared for their children. They were not "amoral individualists," despite the fact that child care was costly and burdensome; indeed, for these poor people, it was especially burdensome. Despite the burdens, the birth of a child was a joyous event and its illnesses a cause for great concern. As the children grew up, they were greatly indulged and inconsistently disciplined.

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I have said that our moral senses are natural. By this I mean that they are to some important degree innate and that they appear spontaneously amid the routine intimacies of family life. Since these senses, though having a common origin in our instinctive sociability, are several, gender and culture will profoundly influence which of them—sympathy or duty, fairness or self-control—are most valued. And since these senses are to a degree indeterminate, culture will affect how they are converted into maxims, customs, and rules. In some places and at some times men cherish honor above all else; at other times and in other places they value equity. Often they restrict these sentiments to kith and kin; sometimes they extend them to mankind as a whole.

The fact that there is so much immoral behavior is not evidence of the weakness of the moral senses. The problem of wrong action arises because of the conflict among the several moral senses that exist, because of the struggle between morality and self-interest, and because of the corrosive effect of those forces that blunt the moral senses. We must often choose between duty and sympathy or between fairness and loyalty. Should I fight for a cause that I do not endorse or stand foursquare with my buddy whatever the cause? Does my duty require me to obey an authoritative command or should my sympathy for persons hurt by that command make me pause? Does fairness require me to report a fellow student who is cheating on an exam, or does loyalty require me to protect my friend?

The way we make those choices will, for most of us, be shaped by particular circumstances and our rough guess as to the consequences of a given act. Sociability has two faces. Our desire to love and be loved, to please others and to be pleased by them, is a powerful source of sympathy, fairness, and conscience. At the same time, this desire is a principle by which we exclude others and seek to make ourselves attractive in the eyes of friends and family by justifying our actions with specious arguments.

I write these lines not long after terrible riots wracked the city, Los Angeles, that I love. What struck me most forcibly about the behavior of those who looted and burned was not that they did it—looting and burning go on in many places whenever social controls are sufficiently weakened—but that invariably the participants felt obliged to justify it even when they faced no chance of punishment.

For while we act out of narrow self-interest much of the time, something in us makes it all but impossible to justify our acts as mere self-interest whenever those acts are seen by others as violating a moral principle. We want our actions to be seen by others—and by ourselves—as arising out of appropriate motives. And we judge the actions of others even when those actions have no effect upon us.

Though the moral senses make partially competing claims upon us, they all share—in their origin and their maintenance—the notion of commitment. Marriage differs from sexual congress because the former involves a commitment. Raising children in a family differs from raising them in a foster home or an orphanage in that the parents do so out of a commitment to the welfare of the child, whereas surrogate parents, however fond they may become of the child, are in part motivated by financial advantage.

The child instinctively wishes to please its parents but in time must learn that it is not enough to please them when they are watching; he is expected to please them when they are not watching as well, which will only occur if he is committed to them. When a child forms friendships, he takes on commitments to peers and expects commitments in return; they test these commitments with games and teasings that challenge one another's self-control, sense of fair play, and obligation to honor the group and its members.

Similarly, employees are hired not simply in the expectation that every day their productivity will exceed their costs, but out of a desire to bring them into a commitment. Since the boss cannot closely supervise more than a few workers all of the time, he wants the workers to make a commitment that when he is not watching they will, up to a point, make his interests their interests. By the same token, employees do not view their employers simply as entities that pay wages, but also as people who have assumed obligations.

Commitments are both useful and honorable. We are fair both because we wish others to make commitments to us and because we condemn unfairness as a violation of a general social contract—a commitment—to treat others as deserving of respect. We develop self-control both because we wish our commitments to be taken seriously and because we view a lack of self-control as a sign that people are excessively self-indulgent. We are honest both because we wish others to accept our word and because we consider dishonesty to be a sign of wickedness. We avoid inflicting unjustified harm on others both because we wish no like harm to befall us and because we are aggrieved by the sight of innocent people suffering. We act as if we were sympathetic to the plight of others both because we wish our favors to be reciprocated and because we regard people who never display sympathy as wrongly indifferent to man's social nature and our mutual dependence.

The economist Robert Frank has pointed out how many human actions that are otherwise puzzling (to an economist!) can be explained once we understand the practical value of commitments visibly made and "irrationally" obeyed. Why do we stick with a spouse even after a more attractive mate has become available, raise children through the years when the rewards seem

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nonexistent, keep bargains when it would be easy to evade them, and insist on a fair division when an unfair one would work to our advantage? And why have we done these things for centuries, suggesting that they have some evolutionary advantage?

The answer in part, says Frank, is that a person who makes and keeps commitments provides other people with a prediction of his future behavior: by his present behavior he is saying, "You can count on me." Someone who can be counted on is likely to attract more opportunities for profitable transactions than is someone who, by past waffling on commitments, seems a poor risk.

But it is not enough merely to keep commitments. As Frank points out, a clever person could keep his promises only when breaking them were easily discovered. People thinking of offering a good deal to someone know this, and so must wonder whether his reputation for keeping commitments is deserved or faked. One important way that they decide this matter is by observing the emotions he displays when confronting a moral choice. Emotions communicate commitments more persuasively than arguments. One can contrive an argument, but it is much less easy (at least for most of us) routinely to fake love, guilt, indignation, or enthusiasm. In the long run, people displaying these emotions will get more offers of marriage, partnerships, and employment than people who seem calculating.

This may help explain why over the millennia the capacity for genuine emotion has survived as a fundamental part of human nature. But the evolutionary advantages of expressing genuine emotions are not the reason we express them on any particular occasion; these emotions for us are not strategic weapons by which we elicit better deals, they are—by definition—real feelings. They are moral sentiments.

For all their differences, many of the dominant ideologies and intellectual tendencies of the 19th and 20th centuries have had in common the replacement of the idea of commitment with the idea of choice.

Analytic philosophy replaced the idea of commitments arising out of moral intuitions with the idea of choosing among "values" which, in principle, were little different from the flavors of ice cream. Freudian psychoanalysis as popularly expressed offered us the prospect of understanding and thereby choosing to modify or even terminate the "repression" that supposedly lay at the root of our cruel superego. And Marxism, like most other secular ideologies, assumed that man could create a wholly new social circumstance for himself. He could choose not to be self-interested, he could choose cooperation without compensation, and he could choose equality over equity. When this Marxist theory did not prove to be self-executing, Marxist practice required that he choose to dull his sympathies in order to endure the horrors of forced collectivization, the gulag labor camps, and psychiatric hospitals used to "cure" people who refused to accept the vision of the New Soviet Man.

Benthamite utilitarianism reminded us of the truism that men choose pleasure over pain, but then added the dubious corollary that the pleasures they choose are equal in value if they are equal in their intensity, duration, certainty, and propinquity. John Stuart Mill struggled to correct this by describing some pleasures that were better than others, but, of course, saying that one pleasure is higher or better than another implies the existence of some standard other than pleasure by which to judge things. This is obvious to anyone who has sought pleasure in the reckless satisfaction of bodily appetites, only to discover that differences in the quality of pleasure affect our chances of finding true happiness. Among the higher pleasures are the satisfactions that come from honor, sympathy, and self-respect.

Choice is a magnificent standard, up to a point. Men have made it clear that they want freedom and will die for it. But the freedom they want is not unconstrained choice. It is, rather, the opportunity to express themselves, enrich themselves, and govern themselves in a world that has already been organized and defined by a set of intuitively understood commitments.

Ordinary people understand this very well, as when they insist that individual freedom is only meaningful in an orderly society. Political liberty, which is one of the greatest gifts a people can acquire for itself, is threatened when social order is threatened. It is dismaying to see how ready many people are to turn to strong leaders in hopes that they will end, by adopting strong measures, the disorder that has been the product of failed or fragile commitments. Drug abuse, street crime, and political corruption are the expression of unfettered choices. To end them, rulers, with the warm support of the people, will often adopt measures that threaten true political freedom. The kind of culture that can maintain reasonable human commitments takes centuries to create but only a few generations to destroy. And once it is destroyed, those who suddenly realize what they have lost will also realize that political action cannot, except at a very great price, restore it.

The idea of autonomous individuals choosing everything—their beliefs and values, their history and traditions, their social forms and family structures—is a vainglorious idea, and could only have been invented by thinkers who felt compelled to construct society out of theories. When Hobbes asked what could make government legitimate, he decided that the answer to that question required him first to explain what could make social order possible. Given his radically individualistic conception of human nature, he was inevita-

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bly driven to conclude that people had somehow agreed to establish a social order by a series of individual choices. But men are not born into a state of nature, they are born into a social compact that has long preceded them and without which their survival would have been impossible.

This can be put in the form of a thought experiment. Imagine people stripped of every shred of their social experiences and set loose in some Arcadian paradise, free to invent "culture." What would emerge? If they were young boys, it might be something akin to the cruelties and tyrannies depicted in William Golding's novel, *Lord of the Flies*. But if they were men and women, it would be something with strange customs, odd dress, and unfamiliar gods, yet invariably with familiar systems of infant care, familial obligation, kinship distinctions, and tribal loyalties.

The results of such a thought experiment cast doubt, in my mind, on the philosophical value of imagining a human being who is presocial, driven by a single motive, or unaware of the main and necessary features of social life. The contemporary philosopher John Rawls may ask us to imagine ourselves in an "original position" behind a "veil of ignorance," but no human being is ever in such a position and, to the extent he is human, cannot possibly be ignorant. Hobbes may ask us to believe that man is driven by the fear of violent death, but were that our overriding concern we would not give birth to children or lavish so much care on them. Why should women risk death in childbirth or men and women expend so much effort on caring for something so perishable and whose protection increases their vulnerability to the predation of others? Rousseau may imagine an equally implausible alternative, man born with no inclination to civil society and corrupted by that society when it is invented and imposed upon him, but no such man can exist and, were he to exist, he could not learn goodness by reading *Robinson Crusoe*.

Moral and political philosophy must begin with a statement about human nature. We may disagree about what is natural, but we cannot escape the fact that we have a nature—that is, a set of traits and predispositions that set limits to what we may do and suggest guides to what we must do. That nature is mixed: we fear violent death but sometimes deliberately risk it; we want to improve our own happiness but sometimes work for the happiness of others; we value our individuality but are tormented by the prospect of being alone.

In short, human nature cannot be described by any single disposition. Efforts to found a moral philosophy on some single trait (the desire for happiness or the fear of punishment) or a political philosophy on some single good (avoiding death, securing property, maximizing freedom) will inevitably produce judgments about what is right. At some critical juncture, those judgments will be at odds with the sober second thoughts of people who will deliberate about what constitutes praiseworthy conduct and who will decide, out of that deliberation, to honor the hero who has risked violent death, to sympathize with the mother who has sacrificed one child to save another, and to reproach the man who has asserted his rightful claim to property at the expense of a fairer distribution of that property.

If one acknowledges that there is no single moral principle but several partially consistent ones and that neither happiness nor virtue can be prescribed by rule, one is better prepared for a more complete understanding of man's moral capacities. Such an understanding was expressed by Aristotle. Though his account is often dismissed as involving "mysterious nonempirical entities" and as being suspiciously conservative in its acceptance of the Athenian status quo, in most respects it precisely anticipates the findings of modern science.

There is certainly nothing mysterious or conservative about Aristotle's assertion that men and women unite out of a "natural striving to leave behind another that is like oneself" because a "parent would seem to have a natural friendship for a child, and a child for a parent," or that "the household is the partnership constituted by nature for [the needs of] daily life." These are as close to self-evident propositions as one could utter. Only slightly less obvious, but still scarcely mysterious, are the arguments that "in the household first we have the sources and springs of friendship, of political organization, and of justice" and that "there is in everyone by nature an impulse toward this sort of partnership [that is, to the city]."

These natural moral sentiments are an incomplete and partial guide to action. They are incomplete in that they cannot resolve a choice we must make between two loved persons or between the desire to favor a loved one and the obligation to honor a commitment. They are partial in that they extend chiefly to family and kin, leaving nonkin at risk of being thought nonhuman. Resolving conflicts and extending our sentiments across the high but necessary walls of tribe, village, and racial grouping, an extension made more desirable by the interdependence of cosmopolitan living, requires moral reasoning to take up the incomplete task of natural development.

Yet the incomplete and partial guidance provided by our moral senses can lead the unwary philosopher to one or both of two errors: to suppose that if a sentiment does not settle everything it cannot settle anything; or to infer that if people differ in their practical choices they must do so on the basis of different sentiments. The first error leads to logical positivism, the second to cultural relativism, the two together to modern nihilism. A proper understanding of human nature

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can rarely provide us with rules for action, but it can supply what Aristotle intended: a grasp of what is good in human life and a rough ranking of those goods.

If the moral senses can conflict with one another and with what prudent action requires under particular circumstances, then living a good life requires striking a delicate balance among those senses and between them and prudent self-interest. Common sense, to say nothing of modern philosophy, shows that there is no single rule or principle by which that balance can be struck. But common sense also gives us a language to use in describing people who have struck that balance well.

When we speak of people we admire, we do not often use the word "moral"—partly, I suppose, because that word strikes contemporary ears as suggesting that the person is priggish, severe, or stuffy. But we also do not use this word, I conjecture, because we do not judge people (unless we do not know them well) by any single trait; we judge them as having a set of traits, a character.

Now, by character we mean two things: a distinctive combination of personal qualities by which someone is known (that is, a personality) and moral strength or integrity. We judge people whole, assessing their strengths and weaknesses, and reckoning up the totals into a kind of human balance sheet. People with the best balance sheet—that is, the most admirable characters—are usually not people who are perfect or have every single virtue to the highest degree; since the virtues—that is, the moral senses—are partially in conflict, that would be impossible. People with the best balance sheet are those who are the best balanced. In common parlance they are "nice persons" or "good guys," or in polite (and vanishing) discourse, "ladies" and "gentlemen."

A nice person takes into account the feelings of others and sympathizes with the joys and sorrows of people with whom he deals to the extent that those joys and sorrows are justifiable and proportional to the circumstances. But even when not expressing sympathy, the nice person does not inflict unjustified harm on innocent parties. He is fair in dealings with others and does not attempt to be a judge in his own case. He has prudent self-control and is not in the grip of extravagant passions that compel others to deal with him only on his terms. But that self-control does not prevent him from taking strong actions or expressing anger when important matters are at stake. He tries (being human, he will not always succeed) to take the long view when the more distant goal is clearly superior to the immediate one. When it is hard to do that, he looks for ways to force himself to do the right thing. Among these are habits: little, routine ways of acting, each rather unimportant in itself, but all combining to produce action on behalf of quite important sensibilities.

For example: the habit of courtesy (which over the long run alerts us to the feelings of others), the habit of punctuality (which disposes us to be dutiful in the exercise of our responsibilities and confirms to others that we have a sense of duty), and the habit of practice (by which we master skills and proclaim to others that we are capable of excellence). When, as inevitably happens, we confront circumstances that require us to choose among our moral senses or that confuse us as to whether there is a moral dimension to the problem, the good person makes the problem apparent by carrying on an inner dialogue about what is required of him.

In some cultures the qualities of a good person might be slightly different from what I have just listed. That the lists are different in different places is important, but not as important as some imagine, for it does not imply that a good character is purely a matter of local custom. If you doubt this, go to the most distant and exotic land and seek to employ an excellent carpenter, boatwright, gardener, or sailor. You will discover, I think, general agreement in those places as to who is and who is not excellent at these crafts, and their qualities of excellence will not be limited to technical skill but will also embrace dependability, fair dealing, and an interest in your wishes.

The balance among the moral senses achieved by a good character living a good life is, to me, more an aesthetic than a philosophical matter. It is aesthetic in two senses: it is a balance that is struck without deliberation or reasoned justifications, and in the character thereby formed there is no clear distinction between form and content.

In this view, as in many others, I am much influenced by the late British philosopher, Michael Oakeshott. He wrote once of the "poetic character of all human activity," by which he meant that (unlike academic philosophy) moral action does not ordinarily spring from the deliberate effort to translate into reality some idealized conception of what ought to be. Moral ideals arise out of habitual human behavior; they are what philosophers (and we) find to be implicit in our predispositions.

Aristotle understood this perfectly. We become virtuous, he said—and thus truly happy—by the practice of virtue. We acquire virtues just as we acquire crafts. We learn how to build by building and how to become a harpist by playing the harp; "so also, then, we become just by doing just actions, temperate by doing temperate actions, brave by doing brave actions." A good character arises from the repetition of many small acts, and begins early in youth. That habituation operates on a human nature innately prepared to respond to training:

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> The virtues arise in us neither by nature nor against nature, but we are by nature able to acquire them, and reach our complete perfection through habit.

We may be inclined to dismiss Aristotle's view as too simple. After all, what did he know, several centuries before Christ, of the temptations of modern life—tobacco, addictive drugs, lush gambling halls, violent or sexually explicit motion pictures, and the anomie and opportunity of the big city? In fact, Aristotle was keenly aware that we are powerfully tempted to do that which is not in our long-term interests and that we give way to those temptations even knowing their likely bad consequences.

WE WANT to live in a community of reasonable order and general decency. What does this imply? Scholars have not always been as helpful as they might be in answering that question. Sociologists and anthropologists have stressed that order is the product of cultural learning without pausing to ask what it is we are naturally disposed to learn. Economists have rejoined by saying that we are disposed to learn whatever advances our interests without pausing to ask what constitutes our interests. And despite their differences in approach, they have both supported an environmental determinism and a cultural relativism that have certain dangers.

If, as these doctrines hold, man is infinitely malleable, he is as much at risk from the various despotisms of this world as he would be if he were entirely shaped by some biochemical process. The anthropologist Robin Fox has put the matter well:

> If, indeed, everything is learned, then surely men can be taught to live in any kind of society. Man is at the mercy of all the tyrants . . . who think they know what is best for him. And how can he plead that they are being inhuman if he doesn't know what being human is in the first place?

Despots are quite prepared to use whatever technology will enable them to dominate mankind; if science tells them that biology is nothing and environment everything, then they will set aside their eugenic surgery and selective-breeding programs and take up instead the weapons of propaganda, mass advertising, and educational indoctrination. The Nazis left nothing to chance; they used all methods.

Recent Russian history should have put to rest the view that everything is learned and man is infinitely malleable. After 75 years of cruel tyranny during which every effort was made to destroy civil society, we discover that the Russian people kept civil society alive, if not well. The elemental building blocks of that society were not isolated individuals easily trained to embrace any doctrine or adopt any habits; they were families, friends, and intimate groupings in which sentiments of sympathy, reciprocity, and fairness survived and struggled to shape behavior.

Mankind's moral sense is not a strong beacon light, radiating outward to illuminate in sharp outline all that it touches. It is, rather, a small candle flame, casting vague and multiple shadows, flickering and sputtering in the strong winds of power and passion, greed and ideology. But brought close to the heart and cupped in one's hands, it dispels the darkness and warms the soul.

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PC With a Human Face

Carol Iannone

A COUPLE of years ago, the term "political correctness" (PC) entered the lexicon of public discourse. Long a designation of approval by the hard Left, it suddenly became a pejorative description for the political agenda of those *on* the Left who were claiming to speak for certain groups defined by race, gender, class, selected ethnicity, and sexual behavior, and who were attempting to intimidate and silence anyone trying to question their new orthodoxy.

A series of books by Allan Bloom, Roger Kimball, and Dinesh D'Souza defined and illustrated different aspects of the issue and its special application to the university; public figures like Lynne Cheney, then-Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and William J. Bennett, then-Secretary of Education, spoke out against the prevalence of PC in scholarship and education; the National Association of Scholars (NAS), which had been formed as far back as the mid-80's to combat the politicization of the academy, came into sudden prominence; and, perhaps most important for bringing the issue to light, a spate of pieces surfaced in such outlets as *Newsweek*, *New York*, *Forbes*, and the *Atlantic*.

The sudden rush of publicity was greeted by a wave of denials from within the PC bastions of the university itself. Various articles and books were hastily assembled to combat what the PC stalwarts saw as exaggeration and distortion. The Teachers for Democratic Culture was formed by academics who had come to be prominently associated with the PC establishment. This group insisted that what was happening in the academy was not "political correctness" but the salutary and progressive "democratization" of higher education. Somewhat amusingly, another group was formed, called—in apparent obliviousness of the oxymoron in the name—the Union of Democratic Intellectuals, pretty much conceding that political correctness did indeed exist, but justifying it.

Yet another species of analysis that began to emerge was one which admitted the problem but placed it within a Left/Right context and, evoking the old moral-equivalency argument familiar from the cold war, claimed a position in the liberal center, between, as it were, both extremes. The latest examples of this supposedly centrist tendency mostly come from the field of literary studies: *The Critics Bear It Away: American Fiction in the Academy*, by Frederick Crews of Berkeley[1]; *Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars*, by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. of Harvard[2]; *Beyond the Culture Wars: How Teaching the Conflicts Can Revitalize American Education*, by Gerald Graff of the University of Chicago[3]; *Politics by Other Means: Higher Education and Group Thinking*, by David Bromwich of Yale[4]; and *Battle of the Books: The Curriculum Debate in America*, by James Atlas of the *New York Times*.[5]

The center is achieved by these writers in different ways. Gates illustrates one way when he says that he himself must

> negotiate a position between, on the one hand, William Bennett, who claims that black people can have no . . . masterpieces, and, on the other hand, those on the critical Left who wonder why we want to establish the existence of a canon . . . in the first place.

By caricaturing the Right to the point where only Cro-Magnon Man or some other specimen of an earlier stage of human development could possibly find any affinity with it, and then by disdaining something or other out of the many actual and available extremes on the Left, one can locate oneself comfortably in the gap between.

Another trick is to equate non-equatables, as when Gates and Atlas compare real thinkers like Allan Bloom or Diane Ravitch with a crackpot like Leonard Jeffries, or when David Bromwich compares Ronald Reagan with the literary radicals. Or one can flatten out and ignore significant distinctions so as to make it sound as if what we have today is at least no worse than what we had in the dark ages of old. Thus Gates notes that whereas in the 50's, academic book reviewers

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[1] Reviewed in COMMENTARY by Peter Shaw, January 1993.
[2] Oxford University Press, 199 pp., $19.95.
[3] Norton, 214 pp., $19.95.
[4] Yale University Press, 257 pp., $30.00.
[5] Norton, 157 pp., $17.95.

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"would typically chastise a study for unpardonable lapses in its citations" and "for failing to take account of the insight yielded by other scholarship," today, a reader's report on a journal submission might say that "so-and-so's paper perpetuate[s] a logic internal to the existing racist, patriarchal order." The implication is that the latter is just more of the former in a different guise—as if the former, unlike the latter, did not represent legitimate scholarly concerns.

Not surprisingly, given the false equivalence on which it bases itself, the center does not hold. When the dust settles, each of these critics, like it or not, really winds up on one side or the other, at least as these sides have been established in the culture wars. But their effort to define a centrist position tells us a great deal about the nature of liberalism at the present moment—and particularly about its susceptibility to extremism and radicalism.

LIKE our new President on the campaign trail, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Gerald Graff, both identified with the putatively moderate Teachers for Democratic Culture, concede some of the excesses of the radicals, but in doing so they yield not an inch of PC territory. In reality what they are presenting is a new and improved version of the PC project, a kind of PC with a human face.

Gates, for example, claims that he and other black critics have repudiated "nativistic essentialism" (special black modes of writing and thinking) and the "naively additive notion of sexism and racism." But he nevertheless persists in describing traditional literary studies as

> the teaching of an aesthetic and political order, in which no women or people of color were ever able to discover the reflection or representation of their images, or hear the resonance of their cultural voices.

Here again Gates resorts to a crude caricature, and this one is clearly built on the very premises that he has supposedly rejected—i.e., that women and people of color have some essential nature requiring a specific aesthetic expression which has been prohibited or denied by the tradition; and it pretty much reprises the entire PC project.

The statement is also untrue. Even Clinton's poet inaugurate, Maya Angelou, has reported feeling such an identification with Shakespeare when she was young that she thought he must have been a black woman. And for that matter, Gates himself seems momentarily to have forgotten that, as a boy, he had copied out passages from Charles Dickens and Jane Austen, passages that expressed what he "deeply felt but could not say," that "named myself in some private way." So much for the inability of "women or people of color . . . to discover the reflection or representation of their images" in traditional literary studies.

Gerald Graff, too, affects to distance himself from the extremes. He admits that there are

> those who disregard the norms of democratic debate and seek to turn the entire curriculum into an extension of a radical social agenda, with compulsory reeducation workshops thoughtfully provided for the unenlightened [as well as] those who justify turning their courses into consciousness-raising sessions on the ground that all teaching is inevitably political anyway.

These rather weighty admissions, however, do not deter Graff from accusing the "anti-PC critics"—his term and his real target—of "exaggeration, patent falsehood, and plain hysteria."

Graff tries to show, among other things, that contrary to the alarms of these critics, traditional works are still being prominently taught in colleges today. He adduces as his primary evidence a series of studies by the Modern Language Association (MLA) which purport to demonstrate, reassuringly, that

> the college literary canon has been changing, as it had for a century, by accretion at the margins, not by dumping the classics.

The most recent of these studies, conducted in 1989 and 1990, has been widely touted by the MLA as significant proof that the anti-PC critics are making much ado about nothing, or at least relatively little.

Yet an article by Will Morrisey, Norman Fruman, and Thomas Short in *Academic Questions* (Spring 1993) analyzes the survey in depth and reveals the utter falsity of the MLA claims. Contrary to the MLA spin, the study results "show that the classics *have* been displaced"; in fact, write the authors,

> they show that things are much worse than the academy's critics have believed. And this despite the clear fact that the survey was carefully designed to produce the most reassuring results possible.

In addition, where the classics have been retained, it is

> in drastically diminished numbers and in an order of relative imputed importance that has little if anything to do with their intrinsic merits or influence on subsequent literature. At the same time, students are being exposed, perhaps prematurely, to critical works written primarily for other professors, and these tend to advance an ideologically freighted reinterpretation of our literary past.

THIS assessment is confirmed by James Atlas, who in *Battle of the Books* compares Harvard's literature department today with that of his undergraduate years in the 60's. Even

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in those heady days, "politics was an extracurricular activity; in the library, we still read Locke and Hobbes." But today, perusing the Harvard catalogue, Atlas exclaims:

> Amazing! In just two decades, the teaching of literature—the values it was supposed to inculcate, the questions it was supposed to answer, the very books themselves—had been transformed! . . . The whole idea behind the new curriculum, I gathered from my own close reading of the Harvard catalogue, was to recognize and identify the ideological forces that produced a work of art. It was the context they were looking at: what a book—any book—said about society. "Modern experimental novels considered as explorations of shifting racial and sexual relations." "An investigation of the treatment of family relations and sexuality in a number of 18th-century novels." "Selected autobiographies raise issues of nationalism, race, gender, and American self-styling. . . ."

In other words, literature as politics, literature as sociology, literature as mass cultural analysis, literature as anything other than literature.

Not only is Graff refuted by the evidence, he is even refuted by his own words. For even as he insists that the classics are not being displaced he makes a case for displacing them:

> A neo-Marxist analysis of [the television game-show personality] Vanna White's autobiography, *Vanna Speaks*, one that emphasized, say, the commodification of the self under post-modern capitalism, might be more challenging than any number of analyses of weightier tomes than Vanna's. The average scholarly article on *King Lear* or *War and Peace* is not in and of itself necessarily more interesting or rewarding than the average scholarly article on the dime novel or the semiotics of advertising.

Overlooking the casual assumption of the legitimacy of such a "neo-Marxist analysis" as Graff proposes, let us grant his latter point for the sake of argument; but what about the advantages of teaching *King Lear* and *War and Peace themselves* over dime novels and advertising as objects of study?

Well, for Graff it is all the same. Since the whole idea of literary criticism is to look for "hidden meaning," he says, why not look for "such meaning in a Harlequin [romance] or a clothing ad?" (Earlier Graff had frankly informed us that his youthful experience was one of "disliking books at an early age." Did he ever recover from this hatred or has he in fact found the perfect way to express it?)

AGAIN playing the moderate, Graff charges the anti-PC critics with extremism for reducing the newer criticism to the idea, as Dinesh D'Souza describes it,

> that texts be selected primarily or exclusively according to the author's race, gender, or sexual preference and that the Western tradition be exposed in the classroom as hopelessly bigoted and oppressive in every way.

Graff huffily responds:

> Anti-PC writers fail to understand that the professionalized academy above all values *sophistication*, a fact that limits the influence of simple doctrinaire arguments.

But what Graff fails to understand is that there is no *substance* to this sophistication much beyond D'Souza's characterization. After all the sophisticated analysis is said and done, and the jargon strained out, this criticism makes the same few reductive and ideologically driven points over and over again. Take, as a representative instance, this passage from *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* by Andrew Ross of Princeton. Speaking of Hollywood films, he remarks that

> there is no guarantee that what is *encoded* in these film scenarios will be *decoded* in the same way by different social groups with different sexual orientations. This is nowhere more obvious than in the highly developed gay subculture that evolved around a fascination with classical Hollywood film and, in particular, with film stars like Judy Garland, Bette Davis, Mae West, Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich, Joan Crawford. . . . Denied the possibility of "masculine" and "feminine" positions of spectatorship, and excluded by conventional representations of male-as-hero or narrative agent, . . . the lived spectatorship of gay and lesbian subcultures is expressed largely through imaginary or displaced relations to the straight meanings of these images and discourses of a parent culture.

Graff cites this passage for its "sophistication and range of reference." Really? From Judy Garland to Joan Crawford is a "range of reference"? To note that gays adore these actresses is a sophisticated insight? Graff defends today's critical jargon for enabling critics to say what could not otherwise be expressed, but actually the reverse is true: the jargon enables critics to bring a pseudo-profundity to observations that could be made by an intelligent twelve-year-old.

The reason Graff can claim "sophistication" for the new "theories" is that they purport to expose the political assumptions behind the givens of our culture, the hidden agenda operating behind the veil of neutrality. Here, too, he is on the side of the radicals, whose perennial comeback to charges of politicization is to insist that their adversaries are equally political, only without realizing or admitting it. (Thus anyone trying to combat the politicization of literature is equally political.) For Graff,

> politics is involved whenever a text makes assumptions about what kind of sexuality is normal and abnormal.

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In other words, any normative view of reality, indeed, any view of reality at all, which necessarily involves favoring some things over others, can be seen as imposing a hidden "hegemony."

Yet as John Searle of Berkeley has noted,

> any list you care to make about anything automatically creates two [unequal] categories, those that are on the list and those that are not.

Exactly so. Even valuing literacy can be made to seem like a hegemonic put-down of a culture built on orality. Speech can be seen as a political choice which discriminates against people who stutter. And maybe even swallowing is a political choice, discriminating against people who drool.

But the ultimate fallacy of the newer critics is that they act as if they were standing on some Archimedean point off the planet from which they can perform their incessant uncovering of the political roots of everything. However (to cite Searle again), even as they speak, write, and argue, they are operating out of certain premises concerning rationality, logic, reality, etc., which they are not then in a position to denounce as hegemony, politics, and so on, without completely undercutting their own position. Or, as C.S. Lewis would put it, they cannot saw off the branch they themselves are sitting on.

That someone like Graff can hold such a radical position regarding the nature of reality while thinking of himself as a responsible moderate tells us that contemporary academic liberalism—with its bland tolerance of all views (except, of course, "incorrect" ones), its habit of skepticism, its inclination to relativism, and its unwillingness to assert objective values—is closer to the nihilistic radicalism of PC than may at first be apparent. James Atlas and David Bromwich help illustrate the connection.

ATLAS's short book is an eloquent and heartfelt defense of the idea of literature, the value of a true education, and the vital importance of a common culture to the life of a society. From this perspective he deplores the fragmentation, politicization, and trivialization of education under the reign of PC.

Still, the more he accepts the conservative critique of PC, the more compelled he is to distinguish himself from the "Right." Thus he charges, inaccurately and without substantiation (since there is none), that the "neoconservative" National Association of Scholars is "openly disdainful of ethnic minorities and other potentially unruly constituencies." And by taking the position that the tradition should be studied because it *is* the tradition rather than because it embodies "transcendent" or "universal" ideas, Atlas is able to distance himself from the invocation by the historian Gertrude Himmelfarb of such putatively dangerous right-wing values as "truth, reason, morality, and artistic excellence."

So, too, with David Bromwich. On the one hand, his analysis of the PC phenomenon in *Politics by Other Means* is fresh, keen, penetrating, and thorough. He is distinctly concerned about the directions he sees academic and intellectual life taking—the loss of individuality in multicultural groupthink, the fragmentation of our public discourse, the politicization of thought, the deterioration of standards, the diminution of free speech. Acknowledging today's racially and ethnically diverse student population to which the PC crowd always appeals as the rationale for its reforms, *his* response

> would be to treat the students as equally enlisting in an intellectual life and varying unpredictably in what they make of that life: they are taken to be equals in this above all.

Instead, the response demanded by the "new fundamentalists," as he calls them, has been

> to pay constant attention to the different beginnings of the new students and use the university as a place for diversified social reinforcement.

"The idea of personal thought," Bromwich continues, "of making one's own experiment in life, often the very belief in intellectual liberty, is scorned." A university based on such concepts cannot "be a place for thought," and Bromwich wonders at administrators like Henry Rosovsky of Harvard who follow a pattern of "evasion and concession," who have not quite given "credence to this [new] mood" but nevertheless have "acquiesced in its demands and aided the advance of its projects."

Now one may ask what the Right has done to equal these depredations of the Left described so well by Bromwich. In a lonely footnote, he admits that with the departure of William Bennett from the Department of Education, as well as "the apparent revival of libertarian principles among conservatives in education," the problem of political pressure in the academy arises chiefly from the Left. Nevertheless, he devotes a couple of fat chapters to outlining the other wing of the treacherous diptych.

To begin with, Bromwich joins Atlas in deploring any tendency toward absolutes. If the Left has promoted culture as "utility," he argues, the Right has promoted it as "sacred." In fact, he asserts that it was this "ideology that promotes reverence for a few sacred texts and ideas" that "led to the encouragement of group cultures as a proper dissolvent of tradition." Here Bromwich falls into faulty chronology, agreeing with the radicals he has criticized, and contradicting his own insistence elsewhere in the book that the preradicalized academy was not a rigid monolith. Surely Bromwich knows that William Bennett, George

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Will, Allan Bloom, *et al.*, rose in *response* to what was happening in the academy, not vice versa.

But it is not merely the literary side of the issue that concerns Bromwich. What bothers him most of all is that conservatives like Will and Bennett, in the course of their defense of the tradition in education, seem to be suggesting that religious belief is at the base of American democracy. For Bromwich, this too is a dangerous idea, and he labors mightily to prove that references to the "Creator" or to the "protection of divine providence" in the Declaration of Independence, not to mention comments made by the Founders—as when Jefferson remarked, "And can liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with His wrath?"—do not mean what they seem so plainly to mean.

All this is the more bizarre because when discussing Allan Bloom, Bromwich not only deplores Bloom's "atheism" but accuses him of thereby being un-American:

> The atheism of Allan Bloom is not the most surprising thing about him. It says more about public opinion in America than about the character of one man, that Bloom should have written a popular book, *The Closing of the American Mind*, which became more popular in proportion as its message was taken to be: a return to the old pieties. Bloom does cherish select monuments, practices, even persons. But his pieties are not America's. They are not like what ours ever have been, or could have been. By two great movements of thought, in particular, which have affected the lives and feelings of most people today, he shows no sign of having ever been touched in the slightest degree. The movements are Romanticism and Christianity, and they have more than one thing in common. They say that all men and women are equal in the eye of a power that surpasses every worldly authority.

Leaving aside the problematic attribution of these ideas to Romanticism, or whether Bloom has been characterized correctly, Bromwich's unexpected and touching regard for Christian truth provides an important insight into the liberal centrist mindset—the tension between its habit of intellectual skepticism and its uneasy awareness of the dangers of an unchecked and unqualified skepticism.

The Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe, often quoted by the Left, but never for the right reasons, has written:

> For a society to function smoothly and effectively its members must share certain basic tenets of belief and norms of behavior. There must be a reasonable degree of consensus on what is meant by virtue and vice; there must be some agreement on the attributes of a hero, on what constitutes the heroic act. Different societies will not hold identical ideas on these questions in every part of the world or at every time in history. And yet, in spite of local and historical variations, we do not know of any society which has survived and flourished on totally arbitrary notions of good and evil, or of the heroic and the cowardly. Our very humanity seems to be committed to a distinction between these pairs, however fuzzy the line may sometimes appear.

It is because James Atlas and David Bromwich understand the threat PC poses to "our very humanity" in this sense that they are fighting it. But it is because they cannot shake free of their fear of "absolutes" and their positively phobic attitude toward conservatives that they are unable to fight the PC radicals effectively. Interestingly and symptomatically, Atlas places the philosopher Richard Rorty in the center he is trying to delineate. But this is the same Rorty who found himself quite at home at a conference held by the academic radicals in 1988 because, as he explained, "The participants tended to take for granted most of the philosophical theses which [Michel] Foucault and [Jacques] Derrida took over from Nietzsche": for example, that "truth is a matter of useful tools rather than of accurate representation," or that "there is no such thing as 'rationality' other than that contextually defined by the practices of a group."

Though they have made real contributions in defending the literary tradition, James Atlas and David Bromwich thus wind up in the end in the same mythical center as Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Gerald Graff—the center that cannot hold against the assaults of the PC radicals, even when it truly wishes to do so.

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The Androgyny Party

Noemie Emery

PRESIDENT CLINTON'S attempt to lift the ban on gays in the military revived the culture war, never quite dormant, and shed some new light on its source. The issue seems less the acclimatization of gays to the culture of military service—structured, hierarchical, overtly aggressive—than the mixing of that culture with another, softer and feminized, that is apparently its reverse.

The friends of the effort to lift the ban are also instructive, starting with the cooptation of the women's movement as ally: a party whose thrust demands leveling, giving dolls to little boys and trucks to little girls, neutralizing the female as the movement pursues its real interest of negating and containing the male. Attached to these is a whole train of causes linked by revulsion toward man-the-aggressor: anti-fur, anti-red meat, anti-blood sports, anti-contact sports, anti-football, anti-army, anti-navy, anti-war.

They all converged at the Clinton inaugural in January, where a war resister married to a much tougher woman who had made much more money than he was sworn in to effusions by the entertainment and fashion industries, amid galas where people wore aprons to protest species-cruelty, men could wear dresses, and women black tie. Forget taxes, forget industrial policy. The Democrats have become the Androgyny party, whose cultural trend is to blur gender differences.

The Clintons are born leaders of this party. Sharing the office, they shift gender roles. He insinuates. She orders. He seduces. She demands. He wants people to love him. She wants to be feared. Her hunger for power is open and palpable; his, buried in layers of charm. She does not bake cookies. He does not draw blood. If men's lives are action, his has been talk. His professional world is the meeting and seminar. His issues are education and welfare, not state or defense.

The Clintons' political traits seem in marked public contrast. She is brash, single-minded, tone-deaf to nuance. He is malleable, pliant, eager to please. His features are soft, hers much harder. Her smile is avid, his sly. An old photo shows her leaning into him as he pulls back, smiling. Seemingly, little has changed.

The military suspects Clinton as an outsider to its culture, and indeed he has spent his life avoiding the arenas where men face each other or nature in either real or faked combat, the battle or the playing field. Running for political office is the great exception to this, and yet Clinton campaigned for the presidency in a feminized operation located somewhere between consciousness-raising and chat. Called at first "alternative media," it really was fem-speak, a talk at the table about family problems, an extended coffee klatsch among friends and neighbors discussing matters of emotion. His fortes were connection, compassion, empathy, an approach that softened the aggressive nature of his quest for power even as its aims were being advanced.

The same approach was also used to soften Al Gore, who at first looked like trouble for the Androgyny party: a certified hunk who had served in the army, with a pretty, blonde wife who had stayed home to raise the children; a backer of the decision to use force in the Persian Gulf. To counter this threat of gender-distinction, Gore played up the tree-hugging part of his character and at the nationally-televised Democratic convention gave a let-it-all-hang-out speech in which he spoke at length about family trauma and asked all to share in his pain.

Maureen Dowd, of the *New York Times*, caught the point of departure between the "John Wayne Republicans, never crying or blinking," and the "Iron John" Democrats. The latter held their national convention in New York, where people bitch for a living; the former in a deep-macho Southwestern city, where people dig holes in the dirt. Dowd quoted a Bush-person as saying, "Real men don't get on the couch." But real men were what the Democrats were not seeking, and had long since stopped trying to find.

Long before Clinton, before Al Gore was Tipperized, there had been signs of the new tendency: Walter Mondale, browbeaten by women in power suits; the reflexive problems with the Gulf war, and before that Grenada; the leniency on crime and welfare; the 1987 memo by the Democratic pollster Pat Caddell to the effect that the Republicans had cornered the testosterone franchise while his own team was now thought of as "soft." Christopher Matthews, writing in the *New Republic*, dubbed his fellow Democrats the "Mommy party," absorbed in the world of the kitchen and nursery, unfit for and afraid of the street.

To call all this female is a slander on women: feminism is not a womanly movement, and many real women do not buy feminist politics (see Margaret Thatcher and Golda Meir). The new Democrats are not so much female as neutered: a party of aggressive women and sensitized men, where Eleanor Smeal of the National Organization for Women gives

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marching orders to Senators Howard Metzenbaum and Ted Kennedy (whose older brothers are now thought of as swine). This is not the party of Lyndon Johnson, who between civil-rights bills went out and shot things, or of Jack Kennedy, who fought to get *into* the navy, and once swam three miles towing an injured shipmate to safety. It is the party of Adlai Stevenson, offended no end by the Kennedy machismo, the first in a long line of sensitive Democratic candidates, victorious now through defeat.

How this will play in the long run remains to be seen. The Androgyny party began emerging in 1972 and since then has lost four contests, winning two, it now seems, in disguise: with two Southern governors who vowed to be "different" and then bowed to the interests, and to dominant wives. In the latest election, the signals were mixed: Clinton won in part because he and Gore seemed *stronger* at times than their GOP counterparts, more focused, energetic, and controlled. After the touch-me convention, they got on a bus and toured Tom Sawyer country as two boys from the heartland, hunks in plaid shirts, muscles showing, flanked by winsome blonde dates. Hillary, who in spring wore blazers and shoved Bill aside in her dash to the podium, in summer was a small blonde in a sundress, giggling, mute.

Was this a con? Clinton as President is giving the country more in the way of unisex than it wanted or ever knew it had bought. The first casualty may be his own pledge to lift the ban on gays in the military. There is a case that gays who adapt to the culture of the military forces should be allowed to stay in them. But it is one that Bill Clinton—draft evader, co-President—does not appear able to make.

Christians and the Holy Land

Hillel Halkin

AMONG the world's great religions, as they were called in pre-multiculturalist days, Christianity occupies a middle ground in its attitude toward the sacramental. On the one hand, it is far removed from the intricately sacralizing activity of Judaism and from the latter's comprehensive schemas of chosen and not-chosen, holy and profane, clean and unclean, commanded and prohibited; indeed, it was the desire to transcend what they considered the restrictive particularism of rabbinic Judaism that impelled the early Christians to break with it.

And yet on the other hand, if one compares Christianity to a religion like Buddhism, its attachment to particulars seems great enough. For the Buddhist, Buddha's teachings are all, his life nothing; nothing non-legendary is known about that life, and had it been lived in another age or country—or even not at all—it hardly would matter. For the Christian, by contrast, Jesus' life is at the center of things; it is the Divine incarnated in a definite time and place in human history, and abstracted from that time and place neither Jesus' teachings nor Christianity's interpretation of them can fully make sense.

From the outset, therefore, the Christian Church regarded the time-and-place-ness of Jesus' life with ambivalence, half-denying and half-affirming the importance of his Jewish and Palestinian specificity. In its geographical aspect, the question was: is Palestine still a holy land for Christians as it is for Jews, both because of the biblical prophecies concerning it and because of the many places in it linked to Jesus' life and ministry? Or, rather, does the abrogation of Jewish particularism mean that Palestine too has lost its special standing, and that just as in Jesus Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither ritually clean nor ritually unclean acts, so, all lands being equally dear to God, there is no longer a Holy Land vs. other countries?

IT IS this dilemma and the response to it that Robert L. Wilken, professor of the History of Christianity at the University of Virginia, examines in *The Land Called Holy*, a study of Christian attitudes toward Palestine from the time of the first Church Fathers to the Muslim conquest of the country in 636.*

As Wilken shows, the Church Fathers were split on the point. Some, like the 2nd-century Justin

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* *The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought.* Yale University Press, 448 pp., $35.00.

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Martyr and Iranaeus, held that Palestine remained central to the Divine plan; both refused to allegorize it into a more universal metaphor and both fully expected that the land of Israel would regain God's blessing and that Jerusalem would be gloriously rebuilt. But other patristic writers, like the early-3rd-century Origen, took an opposed view and argued that all the biblical prophecies concerning the land of Israel and its redemption should be read symbolically as referring to the entire "kingdom of earth."

"I plan to dispel the mistaken notion that the sayings about a good land promised by God to the righteous have reference to the land of Judea," wrote Origen in *Contra Celsum*, and in this he was joined by such figures as Tertullian, Jerome, and Augustine. The last, indeed, the most influential of all early Christian theologians, went so far as to spiritualize completely the concept of a redeemed Holy Land, which referred in his opinion to the Kingdom of Heaven.

And yet even the 4th-century Augustine was not entirely clear-cut on the question. As evidence, Wilken cites a case in which, as he puts it, "piety collided with his theology" when Augustine gave a worshiper in his North African bishopric sanction for ordering a shipment of virtue-rich Palestinian soil. (The soil soon proved its efficacy by healing a paralyzed young peasant.)

One sees here the beginnings of a distinction between a Holy Land that is no longer the object of present or future Divine favor and one that is still a repository of *past* sanctity—a view first put forth most vigorously by Augustine's contemporary, Gregory of Nyssa, for whom the sites trod on by Jesus had "received the footprints of Life itself." Not that Gregory was unequivocal, either. Even though these sites bore "signs of the Lord's sojourn in the flesh," he objected to making pilgrimages to them; since God was no more present in Jerusalem than elsewhere, it was a waste of time and money to travel there.

In fact, Christian pilgrimages to Palestine were practically unknown in the first two centuries after the death of Jesus, and if by Gregory's time they were becoming common, this was largely due to the development of a growing Christian community there that had a strong political and economic stake in encouraging them.

The turning point in this respect was the reign of Constantine, the first Christian emperor, who, apart from founding a new Christian capital in Constantinople, invested heavily in building in and around Jerusalem. It was now that the "discoveries" of the True Cross and of the exact location of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem and the various dramas of his last days in Jerusalem led to the construction of grand Christian shrines like the Church of the Nativity, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the Church of the Ascension, as well as to a proliferation of other Christian pilgrimage sites throughout the country.

In addition to the better-known of these sites, the famed "pilgrim from Bordeaux," who visited Palestine in 333, four years before Constantine's death, reports being brought to the well in Sychar where Jesus met the Samaritan woman, to the tree in Jericho that Zacchaeus climbed to see Jesus on his way to Jerusalem, and to the spot on the Jordan where Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. While in the Jordan Valley, the same pilgrim also visited the house of Rahab the harlot in Jericho, still standing 1,500 years after the town was razed by Joshua, and the exact place where Joshua circumcised the Israelites and buried their foreskins. His travel diary, the *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, testifies to an already well-established tourist industry that was no doubt an increasingly important source of income for Palestinian Christians and a major factor in the prosperity that the country enjoyed until the end of the Byzantine period.

ALTHOUGH Wilken is more interested in theology than in economics and hardly dwells on the connection between them, that connection cries out from the pages of his book. Even the monastic ascetics he writes about at length, who flocked to the Judean desert in the 5th and 6th centuries, making it a more densely populated area than it ever had been before or was to be again, must have needed cash to buy supplies with; and the brisk trade they did in Holy Land relics, or "blessings," must clearly have been furthered by the theological notion that they were thereby helping to advance a "God-trodden land" in which, in the later words of Fra Francesco Suriano's medieval treatise *On the Holy Land*,

> there is not . . . a mountain, a valley, a plain, a field, a fountain, a river, a torrent, a castle, a village, not even a stone which the Savior of the world did not touch.

"Oil from the lamps in the Anastasis [the Church of the Holy Sepulchre], water from the Jordan River, dried flowers from the garden of Gethsemane, stones or dirt from Golgotha"—these are but some of the items mentioned by Wilken that Christian pilgrims to Palestine purchased and took home with them from the 4th century on.

Such "God-troddenness," of course, need not necessarily have been an idea cynically promulgated by those who profited from it. Human beings everywhere are adept at believing in the theoretical justifications for practical benefits, and the Christians of Palestine were no exception. Indeed, as they came to be a majority in the country during the last centuries of Byzantine rule, they quite naturally harked back to the views of Justin and Iranaeus and associated themselves with the many biblical passages promising the land to God's chosen. In some cases they even gave these views, as Wilken observes, "a political interpretation" aimed at asserting their own primacy in Christendom, as when, in the great catechismal dispute over the nature of the Father and Son in the Trinity, they demanded special weight for their opinions because these emanated from "the holy and adorable places" of "the mother of the churches, Zion."

It is thus ironic but not surpris-

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ing that when Palestine fell to conquerors in the 7th century, first to the Persians in 614, and then, after a brief Byzantine reconquest, to the Muslims, its Christian inhabitants, turning again to the Bible, found a prooftext for their situation in the Book of Lamentations, which was originally written after the destruction of the First Temple in 586 B.C.E. For centuries, Christians had considered Israel's loss of land and sovereignty to be the definitive proof that the Jews had fallen out of Divine favor; now, for the first time, they found themselves identifying not only with a biblical Israel blessed on its soil but with a biblical Israel punished on it. In *The Capture of Jerusalem*, a lament written by the Palestinian monk Strategos, the city's sacking by the Persians is compared to both the crucifixion and the expulsion from Eden:

> O gates of Zion, . . . how many calamities have passed through you. . . . O gates of Zion, an honored cross went out from you twice; for once the cross went out with Christ, and now the cross goes out with the patriarch [of Jerusalem] and shepherd Zachariah in captivity. O Zion, how much joy and sadness and lamentation you have showed us. . . . Zachariah the patriarch went out through Zion's gate as Adam went forth from paradise.

The Land Called Holy ends at this point and does not pursue the further history of its subject through the first Muslim period, the Crusades, the long periods of Seljuk, Mamluk, and Ottoman rule, and the 20th century. Certainly, however, the same nexus of theology, politics, and economics continued to be operative in Christian attitudes toward Palestine up to modern times.

The most obvious case is the unprecedented centrality given the country in the theological literature of the age of the Crusades, in which its permanent return to Christian rule was considered by many ecclesiastical writers to be a prerequisite for Christ's Second Coming. But less dramatic examples are in some ways more interesting.

The Israeli historian Joshua Prawer has pointed out, for example, that one reason Christian pilgrims continued to flow to Palestine in undiminishing numbers from the 7th through the 11th centuries, even though the Christian population of the country was declining due to a high rate of conversion to Islam, was that the Mediterranean shipping industry did everything it could to promote and encourage such activity. During this period, Christian Europe ran a heavy trade deficit with the Muslim Middle East, importing far more than it exported, and ships carrying cargoes westward across the Mediterranean had to make the return trip eastward with empty holds—unless these could be filled by Christians convinced that a journey to the Holy Land was more meritorious than trips to such nearer pilgrimage sites as Tours in France or Compostela in Spain.

Similarly, the final collapse of the Crusader Kingdom in 1291, the ejection of the Byzantines from the Levant by the Turks, and the weakening of Mediterranean trade in the late Middle Ages all led to a gradual de-emphasis of Palestine in Christian thought—a trend reinforced by the rise of Protestantism, whose repudiation of the Catholic sacraments included pilgrimage (called "counterfeit worship" by Calvin). And yet when France, Great Britain, and Germany, the last two predominantly Protestant countries, developed renewed imperial ambitions in the Middle East in the 19th century, Christian interest in Palestine revived and new streams of European travelers set out for it.

Although these were for the most part modern-minded tourists—adventurers, travel writers, and archeologists—many of them were also bent on reconciling their Christian faith with the historicism of the times, and a Christian education and Christian emotions certainly motivated most of them. Since many also needed occasional protection from brigandage and a corrupt and inefficient Turkish bureaucracy, they offered a welcome pretext for the European powers to assert and extend their political influence by operating highly active consulates whose functions went well beyond the normal diplomatic ones.

For the Zionist movement, it was certainly a stroke of luck that, when Palestine became a European colonial possession at the end of World War I, the possessor was Protestant England rather than Catholic France, which took control of next-door Lebanon and Syria. One has only to look at the history of relations between modern Israel and the Vatican, which to this day has refused formally to recognize the Jewish state, to realize that, however ambiguous the British position on Zionism was, no Catholic country would have ever issued the 1917 Balfour Declaration or permitted large-scale Zionist settlement under its aegis. Although the Catholic Church may have come a long way in recent years toward moderating its hostile position toward Judaism, there is still clearly a sense in which it finds Jewish sovereignty in Palestine a hard bone to swallow. Unlike the Protestants, whose total desacramentalization of Christianity meant the surrender of all theological claims to the Holy Land, the Catholic Church still finds itself in a state of theoretical juridical conflict with a Jewish government there.

At the same time, when it comes to Israel, one might wish that a number of Protestant churches today, particularly in the United States, would display a bit more of Catholicism's traditionally hardheaded political realism. Certainly, from a Jewish point of view, Israel's Protestant foes these days are only slightly more worrisome than some of its Protestant friends. The former include mainline groups like the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches, which in the years since 1967 have come to view the Middle East conflict as a medieval mystery play with the Palestinians cast as the crucified Jesus and the Jews as the New Testament mob that howls for his blood.

But should one feel any better about the American evangelical fundamentalists who write pro-Israel letters to their Congressmen

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and who cheerfully reassure us that the Jewish state is God's will because, now that he has restored the seed of Abraham to its land, Armageddon and the Last Judgment cannot be far behind? In both cases we have the kind of politically naive millenarianism that Origen attacked in the 3rd century and that Catholicism managed to keep a fairly tight lid on until the Reformation. Pondering it, one is moved to concede that the Catholic priesthood may have had a point when it sought over the centuries to keep the Bible out of the hands of the Christian laity.

WILKEN concludes his book with a brief epilogue in which, while eschewing any specific reference to contemporary events, he deplores the shrinkage of the Palestinian Christian community and declares:

> If it should happen that the only Christians to survive in the Holy Land were caretakers of the holy places, Christianity would forfeit a precious part of its inheritance. . . . Its homeland is in the Middle East, and continuity with its past is dependent on the Christians who continue to live in that land in which the faith is native. Were the holy places turned into museums or archeological curiosities, as they have been in Turkey and Tunisia, the tangible links that stretch back through history to the apostles and to God's revelation in Christ would be severed. . . . Only people, not stones and earth and marble, can bear an authentic witness.

These are eloquent words, and because Wilken writes with sympathy for Jewish feelings and aspirations throughout *The Land Called Holy*, it would be unfair to suspect him of blaming Israel for the steady emigration of Palestinian Christians which has given even Bethlehem, once the most Christian city in Palestine, a Muslim majority. And yet since he does not say so outright, it needs to be said: the major reason that many Palestinian Christians feel they no longer have a future in their country is not Israel, but rather the rising tide of Muslim fundamentalism in the Palestinian national movement, which equates Palestinianism with Islam.

This is especially ironic because, as in Lebanon and Egypt, Christians in Palestine have tended over the course of this century to look to nationalism as the one force that could, by creating a secular identity in which religion played no role, make them the full equals of Muslims. In this respect, like their distant ancestors who were made to discover that the Book of Lamentations pertained to them too, they have been condemned to relive a Jewish fate; for what people in modern times has learned more bitterly than the Jews that an ideology of leveling secularism can easily devour the minority hand that fed it? Only if the Christian community in Palestine were to revert to an earlier outlook, in which it saw itself as Christian first, and Arab or Palestinian second, could it survive, both physically and spiritually, to shoulder the burden that Wilken wishes for it—but this is not likely to happen.

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The Member from Bristol

THE GREAT MELODY: A THEMATIC BIOGRAPHY OF EDMUND BURKE. By CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN. *University of Chicago Press. 692 pp. $34.95.*

Reviewed by GEORGE WEIGEL

SAMUEL JOHNSON, one of the 18th century's most discerning spirits and a man hardly given to hyperbolic praise, once said of his Irish contemporary, the parliamentarian Edmund Burke:

> You could not stand for five minutes with that man beneath a shed while it rained, but you must be convinced that you had been standing with the greatest man you had ever seen.

Why, then, have a number of influential 20th-century historians tarred this same Burke with opprobrium, charging him with inconsistency, venality, and an unscrupulous ambition that casts into doubt the integrity of his political thought?

Part of the reason, especially among his more ideologically assertive critics, is that Burke was right—astonishingly, presciently, relentlessly right—about the French Revolution and about the enduring dynamics of the Jacobin temptation in post-Enlightenment politics.

Where others looked at "1789" and saw a bold declaration of the "rights of man and citizen," a shaking-off of the shackles of traditional authority, and the overture to a bright new future of limitless human progress, Burke saw modernity's first systematic experiment in radical social engineering: a "Republic of Regicide" in which raw power had replaced real authority, an abattoir-in-the-making where

> the elements which compose Human Society seem all to be dissolved, and a world of Monsters produced in place of it.

Then and now, Edmund Burke might have been forgiven a merely political attack on the French Revolution. But his was an essentially moral critique of the Jacobin sensibility; and it cut to the quick. For Burke not only denied Jacobinism's notion of the plasticity of human nature and human institutions; in so doing, he demolished the anthropology that sustained Jacobinism's moral pretensions. It was on the basis of his radical critique of Jacobin irreverence, and his clairvoyant sense of where Jacobin manipulation of the human condition would ultimately lead—i.e., to the Terror—that Burke became the first, fierce opponent of the central myth that has animated the political-intellectual Left for over two centuries: the myth of the millennium to be achieved in this world, here and now, through the medium of politics.

In sum, Burke's opposition to political utopianism has had enduring influence because it was based, not simply on his preferences in the matter of winners and losers between England and France, but on his dissection of the defective morality (and the fantastic arrogance) that is at the heart of modern radical politics. And this is what ideologically-driven critics of Burke could not (and cannot) permit to go unchallenged.

That their challenge has more often been *ad hominem* than *ad rem* should not really be surprising, given the forensic tactics favored by the contemporary epigones of those whom Burke once acidly described as the "philosophers of vanity." But something more was and is involved here. It is precisely because Burke—a man keenly attuned to injustice, and thus not unsympathetic to the revolutionary impulse—understood the Left so well that the Left has treated Burke so meanly.

Burke's reputation in recent years has also suffered from the substitution in the West of political "science" for political philosophy. Among its other unhappy effects, the triumph of the numbers-crunchers has led to a certain woodenness of perception about the great political thinkers of the past. How could the Burke who had once supported relief for Catholics suffering under the penal laws in his native Ireland, how could the Rockingham Whig who defended the cause of the American colonists against George III and the rights of native Indian rulers and customs against the depredations of the East India Company, then turn and condemn the French Revolution? Surely this is "inconsistency." And such inconsistency must reveal a grave flaw in Burke's thought—and, more likely, in his character.

The *gauchiste* critique of Burke will no doubt continue. But it is difficult to imagine any serious commentator unblushingly repeating charges of venality, intellectual corruption, and unscrupulous ambition against Edmund Burke after the publication of *The Great Melody*. For Conor Cruise O'Brien demonstrates beyond reasonable argument that Burke's was in fact a wholly consistent position—and that this consistency lay, not in a frenzied quest for the political main chance, but in a principled rejection of the abuse of power by concentrated, unscrupulous, unaccountable authority.

The arrogance of power was at the root of each of the abuses against which Burke set his teeth: the peonage to which Ireland's Catholics had been subjected since the Glorious Revolution; the cavalier treatment of the American colonies in the aftermath of the French and Indian War; the ruthless behavior of the panjandrums of the East India Company; and the sanguinary tyranny let loose by the "homicide philanthropy" in revolutionary France. If, at one moment, resistance to the abuse of power meant adherence to the proto-liberal politics of the Rockingham Whigs, and, at another, a break with the leader of that fac-

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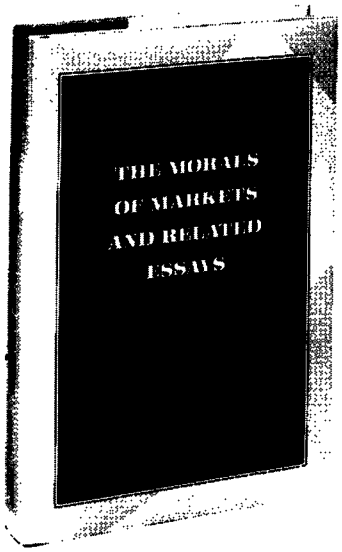

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tion, Charles James Fox, over the depredations of the French Revolution, then one did what conscience and conviction required. Margaret Thatcher was given to saying that there were "consensus politicians" and "conviction politicians"; Edmund Burke was very much of the latter sort.

More controversially, O'Brien argues that Burke's politics were decisively shaped by his smoldering anger over the bigotry that disenfranchised and otherwise publicly crippled Irish Catholics, and that required those who wished any role in the professions or in public life to subscribe to the Church of England. Burke's father, Richard, like his son a lawyer, "went over" to Canterbury in order to be able to pursue his career—although, O'Brien shows, Burke *père* agreed to young Edmund's attending an illegal and clandestine Catholic school for five years, until he was eleven. In his own public life, Edmund Burke was a supportive (and devout) member of the Established Church. But O'Brien suggests that at some level of his psyche and his spirit, Burke remained throughout his life a frustrated Catholic, bitter and perhaps guilty over the compromise his father had made—a compromise that was, of course, the foundation stone of Edmund's own career. That ugly circumstance was, in O'Brien's judgment, a major influence on the formation of Burke's distinctive political ideas, and particularly his detestation of arbitrary, coercive power.

Burke, O'Brien makes clear, was no reactionary. For the obverse of his critique of the arrogance of power was his support for the cause of freedom: in Ireland, the American colonies, India—and in France. But Burke believed, not in the *liberté* proclaimed by the French Assembly on the thin basis of abstractions about the rights of man, but in the *ordered* liberty that had evolved in England, under the tutelage of the common-law tradition, since the days of *Magna Carta*. As he wrote in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*:

> The freedom . . . that I love and . . . to which I think all men intitled . . . is not solitary, unconnected, individual, selfish Liberty. As if every Man was to regulate the whole of his Conduct by his own will.

Rather, Burke was an exponent of "a manly, moral, regulated liberty." For

> men must have a certain fund of natural moderation to qualify them for Freedom, else it become noxious to themselves and a perfect Nuisance to everybody else.

It was on the basis of that conviction that Burke, unlike so many of his contemporaries (and ours), distinguished between, on the one hand, the limited revolutions of 1688 and 1776 and, on the other, the limitless revolution of 1789. The former were in continuity with the central political tradition of the West as that had developed out of Athens, Jerusalem, and Rome; they were revolutions of conservation and extension. The latter, by contrast, self-consciously and willfully broke the mold and rejected the tradition, proposing to substitute for it a utopian forced march toward the perfected human community. Burke, who wrote his *Reflections* some years *before* the French reign of terror got going in earnest, knew precisely where this modern political hubris was heading in his own time; he would not have been surprised by Lenin, Stalin, Mao, or Pol Pot—heirs of the Jacobin impulse in our day.

The Great Melody is not "biography" in the usual sense of the term; those unfamiliar with the chronological outline of Burke's life, or with the politics of the reign of George III, would be well-advised to do a little background reading before tackling O'Brien's tome. The book is also irritatingly composed, with frequent, nervous admonitions from the author set parenthetically into the text, reminding us (on p. 138) to "see above pp. 131-135" and (on p. 281) to "see below, p. 282." But these vexations aside, O'Brien's device of a "thematic biography," concentrating on the evolution of Burke's thought as illustrated through the Irish, American, Indian, and French controversies (several of which were running simultaneously) pays rich dividends, not least because O'Brien is frequently content to let Burke speak for himself, at length.

And what speech it is: page upon page of evidence that political discourse in the English language can be vigorous, intellectually rich, noble, and moving. O'Brien's huge excerpts from Burke's great speeches, books (primarily *Reflections*), and occasional pamphlets and essays also provide ample support for the claim that Burke was not only a master rhetorician but a supremely gifted political aphorist whose insights, transposed to our own time, remain remarkably fresh.

Thus, Burke on conciliation with the American colonies (and on America in the post-cold-war world?):

> Magnanimity in politics is not seldom the truest wisdom; and a great empire and little minds go ill together.

Burke on free trade (then and now?):

> The world I apprehend is large enough for all, and we are not to conclude that what is gained to one part of it is lost of course to the other.

Burke on the Irish penal system (and on certain facets of the welfare state?):

> It was a machine of wise and elaborate contrivance, and as well fitted for the oppression, impoverishment, and degradation of a people, and the debasement, in them, of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man.

Burke on the relationship between manners and statutes (and on the American culture war?):

> Manners are of more importance than laws. Upon them, in a great measure, the laws depend. The law touches us but here and there, and now and then. Manners are what vex or soothe, corrupt or purify, exalt or debase, barbarize or refine us, by a constant, steady, uniform, insensible operation, like that of the air we breathe in. They give their whole form and color to our lives. According to their quality, they aid morals,

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they supply them, or they totally destroy them.

And, finally, Burke to his constituents on the responsibilities of a democratic legislator (in contemporary Washington, as well as 18th-century Bristol?):

> Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion.

AT SEVERAL points in this brilliant book (and in an appendix composed of an exchange of letters with the Oxford scholar Isaiah Berlin), Conor Cruise O'Brien seems almost obsessively determined that his subject and hero not be conscripted by contemporary Anglo-American conservatives as their patron saint.

It is true that Burke has little in common with libertarian conservatism; but it is not so clear why O'Brien seems so nervous about the embrace of Burke by, say, neoconservatives. Neoconservative understandings of the cold war were virtually identical to Burke's "take" on the threat of Jacobin France.

Moreover, in the post-cold-war context, Burke's emphasis on the crucial importance of manners and morals in a republic, his insistence that men have to be fitted for freedom by habits of moderation, and his defense of traditional "pre-political" authorities are all anathema not only to the hard Left but to many liberals for whom the defense of the sexual revolution and the nanny state is the bottom line of contemporary politics. Indeed, in the current cultural contest over the meaning of freedom in America—a contest touching such volatile and impassioned issues as abortion, euthanasia, gay rights, and political correctness on campus—the Burkean case is being argued not by such proponents of the autonomous, imperial self as the ACLU, Planned Parenthood, or Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun but rather by conservative and neoconservative defenders of "traditional values" or "family values."

Edmund Burke, an extraordinarily gifted and accomplished political intellectual, was profoundly skeptical about the arrogance and aggressiveness that intellectuals too often bring to politics—especially intellectuals whose ideas had come unstuck from a foundation in human nature and human experience. The former Member from Bristol would, in that sense, immediately understand much of what is happening these days, especially on the "social issues," in the Potomac fever swamps. And now, as then, he would most likely be in the moral and political opposition.

Banshee Shakespeare

COMPLETE PLAYS. By EUGENE O'NEILL. Edited by TRAVIS BOGARD. *Library of America.* VOLUME I: 1913-1920. *1,104 pp. $35.00.* VOLUME II: 1920-1931. *1,092 pp. $35.00.* VOLUME III: 1932-1943. *1,007 pp. $35.00.*

NINE PLAYS. By EUGENE O'NEILL. *Random House (Modern Library). 829 pp. $20.00.*

Reviewed by MORRIS FREEDMAN

EUGENE O'NEILL (1888-1953), America's one great playwright by world acclaim, has not always enjoyed popularity. At the moment, though, he is in the ascendant. The Modern Library has reissued its 1932 "Giant" edition of nine of his plays; a British firm has published the complete plays in a massive tome, with an introduction by John Lahr; and the Library of America, in what is surely destined to be the definitive text, has put out a handsome three-volume set sorting the plays chronologically. Meanwhile, a recent revival of *Anna Christie* enjoyed a much-discussed run on Broadway.

O'Neill, whom George Bernard Shaw once called "a banshee Shakespeare," is a playwright who needs to be argued for, often against a critic's better instincts. Thus, Joseph Wood Krutch, who also wrote the introduction to the earlier Modern Library edition, led the way in an essay called, strenuously, "Eugene O'Neill's Claim to Greatness." The drama critic Eric Bentley wrote a famous essay with the revealing title, "Trying to Like O'Neill." And then there was Mary McCarthy, who in her days as a theater critic, openly scorned O'Neill as a writer even as she paid tribute to the concentrated effect of particular works.

What was that effect? Lionel Trilling, another critic who praised O'Neill while trying not to bury him, put it this way:

> We do not read Sophocles or Aeschylus for the right answer; we read them for the force with which they represent life and attack its moral complexity. In O'Neill, despite the many failures of his art and thought, this force is inescapable.

The force of which Trilling spoke was rooted in an irreducibly adolescent, even sophomoric, solemnity over which O'Neill triumphed by dint of what Mary McCarthy termed "the element of transcendence jutting up woodenly . . . like a great homemade Trojan horse." The plays that remain hauntingly powerful—*Anna Christie, The Emperor Jones, The Hairy Ape, Desire Under the Elms, Ah, Wilderness!*, and the classically plain *Long Day's Journey into Night*—were the work of a lumbering craftsman who drove himself to take risks, and who, in the end, seemed to know, by instinct if not by intellect, what he was about.

What emerges in a concentrated perusal of O'Neill's texts is their essentially American character, as much a matter of tone and voice as of subject. Although he wrote little specifically about either world war, the Depression, or the civil-rights movement—all major events of his lifetime—he was sensitive to them the way one is to climate and locale, in his blood and bones. He did write a trilogy in the classical mode about the Civil War, and several plays were set in early-19th-century New England. O'Neill also made a prodigious effort to record phonetically, if sometimes ludicrously, a range of American dialects. And in *Ah, Wilderness!*, an honest, sentimental, funny, and dignified play, he composed a joy-

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ous celebration of the Fourth of July and the American family.

In the dark American tradition of Melville, Poe, and Faulkner, O'Neill also infused into his work the pathologies that dominated his own life. His youth was shadowed by his mother's addiction to alcohol and his father's materialistic ambitions, recorded with fidelity and affection in *Long Day's Journey*. His older son, Eugene, Jr., a classical scholar at Yale, committed suicide; his younger, Shane, was a lifelong drug addict. Although he was charmed by his daughter Oona's beauty and intelligence during her teen years, he rebuffed her contemptuously when she sought a Hollywood career, and rejected her fiercely and permanently when she married Charlie Chaplin. What enabled him to control his own alcoholism and to continue productive work through long periods of debilitating illness and a turbulent domestic life were an iron will and vast ambition.

The moral forcefulness that Trilling alluded to distinguishes O'Neill's work from that of his contemporaries in the theater. Thornton Wilder touched up and sentimentalized the family in *Our Town*; in O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness!*, by contrast, the family achieves representativeness through the precision of its defining details. The saloon in William Saroyan's *The Time of Your Life* is a place we visit like curious, uninvolved tourists; in O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh* we are forced to live in the saloon, virtually overcome by the alcoholic stench and the futile solemnity of its trapped denizens. For all his rhetorical flights, O'Neill confronted reality without filters.

The most striking contrast, possibly, emerges from placing *Long Day's Journey* alongside Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, both plays about dysfunctional families with two unfocused sons and a father driven by compulsions to be successful and "well-liked." In the O'Neill play, we know the minutiae of James Tyrone's profession, the kind of liquor he stocks and car he owns, his impoverished childhood, his failed real-estate deals, his wife's Catholicism; we never know comparable facts about Miller's Willy Loman, not even (as Robert Warshow emphasized in an essay about the play) what it is he carries in his salesman's bags. Where Miller effects an uneasy empathy with a finally mythical "low" man, O'Neill makes us party to a shattering day in the life of a searingly real one. An enormously skilled dramaturgy makes *Salesman* work; *Long Day's Journey*, adhering to the barest essentials of the classical unities, works through the particularity, the exactitude, and the clinical candor of its observations.

THESE new editions are beautiful books. (As reading declines, the art of bookmaking seems to improve.) In the Library of America's three volumes, the first includes fascinating one-act plays like *Fog*, which have not been available for years, while the third contains a chronology of the major occurrences in O'Neill's life. The notes to all three volumes, which appear unobtrusively at the end of each, give writing, production, and publication histories, and fully and crisply annotate the text in exemplary academic fashion.

O'Neill himself selected the contents of the Modern Library edition, whose editorial matter consists only of a brief anonymous biography. The plays it contains—*The Emperor Jones, The Hairy Ape, All God's Chillun Got Wings, Desire Under the Elms, Marco Millions, The Great God Brown, Lazarus Laughed, Strange Interlude,* and *Mourning Becomes Electra*—preceded his winning of the Nobel Prize in 1936 (as did *Ah, Wilderness!* and *Days Without End*). They reveal, in addition to O'Neill's greatness, the limitations of his art and critical instincts.

For one thing, O'Neill kept confusing ambition with achievement. Sheer size impressed him. *Lazarus Laughed* calls for a chorus of 159, "doubling in approximately 420 roles." *Mourning Becomes Electra* is a three-play rendering of classical Greek material in the context of the American Civil War. Both are tedious to read and a challenge to produce other than in rodeo-like surfeit—as the Theater Guild, which for a long time represented high Broadway art, did in its spectacular presentations.

For all his alertness to European models, O'Neill had little of Chekhov's understated subtleties and obliquities, Ibsen's stolid single-mindedness, Shaw's clarity, Pirandello's philosophical complexity. But he did keep pure his unmodulated American (and Strindbergian?) intensity, as well as his commitment to the mission of making himself a great playwright. Unlike Miller, Clifford Odets, Tennessee Williams, or Lillian Hellman, he cannot be said to have "sold out" in any way to anyone.

What may confuse us about O'Neill's stature is not that his admirers claimed too much for him, but that they sometimes claimed the wrong things. O'Neill often did not quite know what he wanted to say and said much of it crudely, coarsely, awkwardly, excessively, melodramatically—but, for better and worse, with an extravagance that compelled attention. In company with his contemporaries William Faulkner and Theodore Dreiser, if O'Neill had not written so much so badly, he might not have written so much so effectively.

Trouble in Paradise

SICK SOCIETIES: CHALLENGING THE MYTH OF PRIMITIVE HARMONY. By ROBERT B. EDGERTON. *Free Press. 209 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by BRET STEPHENS

NOTHING has lent greater intellectual credibility to the prevailing academic ethos than the principle of cultural relativism, first adumbrated in the work of early-20th-century anthropologists and now entrenched in most anthropology departments nationwide. This widely shared understanding—known in scholarly circles as "functionalism," "interpretivism," or "adaptivism"—assumes that the ills besetting the modern urban world are at root unnatural, the result of the exploitation, cor-

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ruption, and civil strife characteristic of our times. Following Rousseau, cultural relativists among anthropologists have proceeded to search for a more authentic human nature in primitive or "folk" societies, where, in simpler circumstances, cultural conventions supposedly harmonize with their environment. As for such common "folk" customs as infanticide, clitoral excision, ubiquitous warfare, foot binding, etc., these, while perhaps repulsive to Western mores, are held to be sensible and legitimate practices that cannot be subjected to our culturally biased judgment.

Supporting the contentions of the cultural relativists is a library of anthropological literature written by such luminaries as Robert Redfield, Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, and Bronislaw Malinowski, all of whose books have made a profound impression on both the academic world and the popular imagination. Among its other effects, cultural relativism's heavy stress on the compatibility of primitive societies with their natural surroundings has helped engender today's hysterical environmentalism, with its demand that we abandon our economy and embrace a way of life more typical of folk communities.

All the more reason, then, to welcome *Sick Societies*, by the noted UCLA anthropologist Robert Edgerton. This book explodes the assumptions of cultural relativism by scrutinizing its underlying scholarship. In particular, and in colorful detail, Edgerton examines a variety of folk cultures that have persisted in maintaining traditional practices which are *maladaptive*: that is to say, "practices that are inefficient at coping with environmental demands or are harmful to the people's health and well-being." While Edgerton confines himself to establishing the existence, and indeed the prevalence, of maladaptation, his book not only performs the valuable task of demolishing the relativist myth, it also provides a scholarly vehicle through which to reassert the West's cultural superiority.

In his introductory remarks, Edgerton generously extends his congratulations to the work of his relativist colleagues. "The relativists' insistence on respect for the values of other people," he writes, "has undoubtedly done more good for human dignity than it has done harm to science." Harm, nevertheless, it has done. Edgerton attributes the success of the "adaptivist paradigm" to several factors, including a "benevolent conspiracy" on the part of anthropologists to put the societies they study in a good light. Further, he suggests that "interpretivism," which holds that cultures can in no way be objectively evaluated but instead must be appreciated for their intrinsic virtues, is really only a sort of intellectual onanism. While effective in advancing the relativist world view, this approach has disserved scientific integrity and, in fact, has gravely slandered the cultures under examination. Interpretivists "make the people they study falsely incomprehensible and thus dehumanized."

MALADAPTIVE behavior is a feature common to all cultures, but Edgerton points to a number of factors which make it far more pervasive in isolated, primitive societies. Where there is an absence of rigorous intercultural competition, populations tend to stick with traditional solutions to common problems even if they are visibly unhappy with the quality of these solutions. The inherent conservatism of most societies, conspicuous in cults of ancestor worship, not only works to prevent technological innovation but breeds suspicious attitudes toward any form of change. Worse still, because these societies have such a limited scientific understanding, they often make erroneous causal inferences, superstitiously attributing all manner of ills and disasters to witches, devils, or unappeased goddesses.

But living in perpetual terror of wrathful ghosts is as nothing to the day-to-day difficulties and misery of many folk societies. Poor health is a common feature, whether one is living in a mosquito-infested swampland or the balmy, breezy South Pacific (where until recently the average life expectancy was thirty years). In one particularly gruesome example, Edgerton depicts the surgical practices adopted by the Mae Enga of Papua New Guinea to treat arrow wounds:

> A specialist used a bamboo knife to make an incision under the victim's armpit and then broke a rib with a wedge so that he could insert two fingers into the thorax, collapsing a lung in the process.

Sick Societies also discredits the widespread view that folk peoples are somehow born ecologists who know better than to mistreat the land that provides their sustenance. Folk communities were not only responsible for the deforestation of the entire Middle East, but can be blamed for driving mammoths, saber-toothed tigers, and other big game to wholesale extinction.

A particularly tragic feature that predominates in most folk societies is their rigid and clearly defined social stratification which is, among other things, commonly abusive of women. Wife-beating and institutional gang-rape are shared by the Cheyenne of North America with the Gusii of Western Kenya. In many folk societies, females are arbitrarily denied adequate access to animal protein; in one community, this led women to supplement their meager diet with human flesh. It would be both factually mistaken and morally callous, although in keeping with the dictates of cultural relativism, to suggest that women become inured to or even enjoy this sort of treatment. A saying popular among Pokot women goes: "We cannot rule men, we can only hate them."

Other factors help to immiserate folk communities. The Inuit are beset by a homicide rate comparable to that of any inner-city ghetto; in the tribal highlands of Papua, New Guinea, warfare accounts for between 20 and 30 percent of all deaths. Long before the Europeans colonized Africa, political exploitation was well known to the Zulus. Slavery supplied the bulk of labor for the West African Asante empire. Thomas Hobbes's depiction of life in the state of nature as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" is closer to folk so-

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ciety than any of Rousseau's eloquent declamations.

To be sure, maladaptive practices have also flourished, and continue to exist, in the West. Edgerton suggests, for example, that our excessive emphasis on individualism has "brought about such a loss of community that the consequences now threaten our common well-being." But he insistently draws sharp qualitative distinctions among cultures. After all, it is only in the West where painless medical techniques prevail, where women have real political and economic opportunities, and where the specter of warfare no longer haunts everyday life.

"MULTICULTURALISM"—today's variant of cultural relativism—is now a central byword in the political vocabulary of undergraduate students and university administrators alike. In their enchanting tales of folk societies, anthropologists have helped to encourage the politics of multiculturalism by suppressing the dark, the unsettling, the often disgusting and violent facts. The sobering stories told by Robert Edgerton serve to remind us of the danger posed by academic theories to our sense both of others and of ourselves.

On Belief

A FAR GLORY: THE QUEST FOR FAITH IN AN AGE OF CREDULITY. By PETER L. BERGER. *Free Press. 218 pp. $22.95.*

Reviewed by DAVID SINGER

PETER BERGER'S writings on religion are a rare combination of scholarly detachment and personal engagement. As a leading figure in interpretive sociology, Berger, who teaches at Boston University, has provided a coherent account both of how the elements of the religious world view—what he terms the "sacred canopy"—are constituted and of how they come under challenge. As a believing Lutheran, he has also sought to make the case for religious belief today, defending the life of faith against its contemporary "cultural despisers." Most remarkably, Berger has employed the tools of sociological analysis itself to establish the groundwork for theological speculation and, by extension, theological affirmation.

Berger's analysis has been developed in a series of books, including *The Sacred Canopy* (1967), *A Rumor of Angels* (1969), *The Heretical Imperative* (1979), and now *A Far Glory.* It may be summarized, much too briefly, as follows.

Modern society, Berger observes, has witnessed the progressive removal of whole sectors of life and culture from the domination of religious symbols and institutions. This process has been linked at least in part to the rise of science and technology, which have inculcated "highly rational modes of thinking" and introduced "rational techniques to solve problems which previously rendered human beings helpless."

Yet Berger does not wholly agree with those who view modernity as leading inexorably to secularization. There are, he writes in his new book,

> vast regions today in which modernization has not only failed to result in secularity but has instead led to reaffirmations of religion.

While Europe as an area and intellectuals as a group give evidence of the type of secularization brought about by the impact of scientific rationalization, the "rest of the world," including the United States, "is as furiously religious as ever, and possibly more so."

Instead of secularization *tout court,* Berger points to what he calls "pluralization," a situation in which a multiplicity of religious groups interact with one another in such a way that "different lifestyles, values, and beliefs begin to mingle." Given the "sheer massivity" of such pluralization in modern times, Berger argues, the end result can only be "cognitive contamination." He explains:

First through mass literacy, and

DAVID SINGER *is director of Research and Publications of the American Jewish Committee.*

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then through modern mass communication, people encounter different cultures and world views. . . .

The thought obtrudes that one's traditional ways of looking at the world may not be the only plausible ones. . . . The world view that until now was taken for granted is opened up, very slightly at first, to a glimmer of doubt. This opening has a way of expanding rapidly. . . . There are few certainties, convictions become mere opinions, and one becomes accustomed to considering just about any different view of things.

Once "contamination" has taken place, Berger sees three basic options open to the individual believer and religious groups. He labels them "cognitive surrender," "cognitive retrenchment," and "cognitive bargaining." In the first, evident among broad sectors of mainline Protestantism today, the modern denial of transcendence is accepted as correct and an attempt is made to reformulate the religious message in, basically, a secular mode. In the second, which is dramatically opposed to the first, and is to be seen among Christian and Jewish fundamentalists, the basic premises of the secular outlook are rejected *in toto*, while traditional religious teachings are reaffirmed in a wholesale fashion. Finally, in the third, religious and secular viewpoints are brought into dialogue with one another, and an attempt is made to reach a compromise.

Berger's categories—surrender, retrenchment, bargaining—are meant to be descriptive and analytical, but a strong evaluative element enters as well. Those who have hoisted the "flag of surrender," he writes, achieve cognitive relief at the price of theological suicide; the wholesale concessions they offer to modernity end up being "self-liquidating," as

> people discover that one can be ethical without Jesus, existentially authentic and mentally healthy without religion, and most emphatically political without the church.

Berger is much more respectful of "retrenchment"—mentioning the Mormons, Hasidim, and the Amish in this context. In particular, he recognizes the heroism involved in attempting to "reaffirm the whole kit-and-caboodle of orthodoxy in the teeth of modern secularity." Still, retrenchment requires "withdraw[ing] into a fortress," and fortresses have a way of proving vulnerable:

> Allow one small crack in the wall, and the mighty wind of the surrounding pluralist culture is liable to come roaring in.

Berger's own sympathies are clearly with cognitive bargaining, and in a very real sense *A Far Glory* may be said to constitute a how-to manual in that mode. He is aware that the type of religious give-and-take he has in mind will appear to some as half-hearted. More seriously, he knows full well that the

> very first step in the bargaining process lands one on a slippery slope whose foot is on the debris of shattered faith.

Still, in Berger's view, cognitive bargaining is the "only honest course" for people who try to "reconcile a religious quest with an honest recognition of their contemporary social context."

A Far Glory is the most upbeat analysis that Berger has produced to date. Clearly sensing that his chief intellectual opponents, the secular intelligentsia who rule academia, are in a less confident mood at present, Berger finds little need to polemicize against them. By and large it is not his adversaries who preoccupy him here but religious believers, and he urges them on, stressing the religious *opportunities* created by pluralization.

This marks a clear shift in emphasis from Berger's previous work, which presented religious choice first as an intellectual possibility (*A Rumor of Angels*) and then as a religious necessity (*The Heretical Imperative*). In *A Far Glory* the stress instead is on the "unprecedented freedom" that is a consequence of the modern pluralistic situation, on the welcome fact that the very multiplicity of religious options offers a unique opportunity to the contemporary believer to move from "fate"—the condition into which one is born—to "choice."

But there are choices and then there are choices. While Berger appears to exult in the sheer variety of religious options available at present, this does not prevent him from indicating his own strong preferences. Treated with cold contempt are not only the "wimps" of mainline Protestantism but also (despite Berger's mild sympathies for "retrenchment") the "thugs" inhabiting the "wilder shores" of evangelical Protestantism. Berger also has surprisingly little patience for those who in a Jewish context would be called "returnees," neo-traditionalist and neo-orthodox types who "in laying claim to certitude, must deny [their] own experience of uncertainty." As for Roman Catholicism, Berger discusses it at length but comes up with hardly anything positive to say. On the other hand, he shows great respect for the various strands of Buddhism.

Most directly, Berger identifies with the liberal Protestant tradition (growing out of the work of the 19th-century thinker Friedrich Schleiermacher) that focuses inductively on

> religious experience rather than religious ideation as the object of theological reflection, rejecting the notion that reason must be abandoned before one enters the realm of faith, and being prepared to examine both one's experiences and one's own religious training in the light of the modern empirical disciplines.

In stressing religious experience, Berger is especially interested in the "signals of transcendence"—harbingers of a supernatural reality that emerge out of "prototypical human gestures":

> The recurring urge of human beings to find meaningful order in the world . . . ; the redemptive experiences of play and humor; the ineradicable capacity to hope; the overwhelming conviction that certain deeds of inhumanity merit absolute condemnation, and the contrary conviction as to the absolute goodness of certain actions of humanity; the sometimes searing experience of beauty, be it

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> in nature or the works of man; and many others one could easily enumerate. Each of these, though quite ordinary in many cases and almost never perceived as supernatural, *points toward* a reality that lies beyond the ordinary. . . .

Berger is the first to acknowledge that the experiences he describes "do not unambiguously or compellingly testify to transcendence," and can be "amply explained in secular terms." It is here that faith, in the sense of trust, enters the picture. First, there is "faith in my own experience," and the daring "to suppose that what this experience intends is not a lie." Second, there is "faith in the ultimate benignness of the universe," a sense that the "transcendent reality I have perceived is not only out *there*, but is there for *me*." This combined faith is the hallmark of the inductive approach.

BERGER'S chosen path is not without difficulties. One obvious problem is how to distinguish between true and false religious experience, and, indeed, between signals of transcendence and signs of psychosis. Perhaps more compelling, though, is the question of how one moves from an ambiguous encounter with a transcendent realm—the world of hints and signals—to the specific truth claims put forward by the great historic religions.

This problem is neatly illustrated by Berger's own religious affirmations in *A Far Glory*. When all is said and done, Berger turns out to be a believing Christian, and, more impressively, a believing Christian of strong traditionalist leanings. The opening chapter contains the most direct statement to date of his Christian affirmations, and they include a belief in the "redemption of men through God's coming into the world in Christ" and the view that the "ultimate weakness of God [in Christ leads] to the blinding revelation of His omnipotence."

Berger is entitled to his religious beliefs; but it is just not clear how he came to them via the inductive process. At one point he asserts:

> I affirm Christianity because I have been touched by its symbols, because the reality it alleges fits my own experiences of what is real about the world, about the human condition, about my own life.

But what if Berger had been born a Muslim or a Hindu; would he not have embraced those systems with equal conviction? And if so, what has happened to the shift from "fate" to "choice"? Is it not safer to assume that Berger's Christian affirmations exist independently of the signals of transcendence he has experienced, or at least that the two relate to each other in a more complex way than he acknowledges?

But the theme of *A Far Glory* is the "quest for faith," and that quest, Berger repeatedly reminds us, will of necessity be an ongoing process. What is important in his view is that we continue the quest, buoyed by the conviction that the signals of transcendence do not deceive us. Both through his writings and by the personal example of his faith, Peter Berger gives us reason so to believe.

Strategies of Ethnic Politics

MEXICAN AMERICANS: THE AMBIVALENT MINORITY. By PETER SKERRY. *Free Press. 400 pp. $27.95.*

Reviewed by
CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

ARE Mexican-Americans "immigrant ethnics"—just like the Europeans who arrived and thrived a century ago? Or are they members of a "minority"—laying claim, like today's blacks, to reparations for past discrimination? According to Peter Skerry, a director of UCLA's Center for American Politics and Public Policy, the bad news is that

> contemporary political institutions and culture encourage many Mexican Americans to "assimilate" precisely by defining themselves as an oppressed racial minority.

The injurious consequences of this situation—injurious both to Mexican-Americans themselves and to the larger society—are laid out by Skerry in a book that is certain to become a blueprint for our understanding of the ethnic politics of the future.

The strategies chosen by the political leadership of the Mexican-American community—from disparate-impact employment suits to voting-rights challenges to bilingual-education drives—are deeply informed by the race-conscious, quota-driven ideology of today's civil-rights establishment. They are also, often, unrelated to the conditions they are supposedly designed to address.

This Skerry makes clear in his illuminating comparison of Los Angeles with San Antonio, Texas. Mexicans face less residential segregation in Los Angeles than in San Antonio, and suffer a smaller gap between their income and that of "whites." Yet, as Skerry notes,

> in the relatively benign context of Los Angeles, Mexican-Americans have pursued racial minority politics; while in the harsher context of San Antonio, their politics has been more akin to immigrant ethnic politics.

Although San Antonio's "friends-and-neighbors politics" has given Mexican-Americans real political power and leverage, Los Angeles is more representative of national trends, and far more likely to be on the cutting edge of Mexican political style in the future.

It is in Los Angeles, too, that the gap between Mexican political leaders and the rank-and-file shows up most grievously. That gap became apparent in the 1970's when "integrationist" leaders pushed for school busing against the expressed wishes of the community they claimed to represent. Today, the biggest gap, not only in Los Angeles but nationwide, is visible on the abortion issue. Mexicans oppose abortion in far higher percentages than most Americans, but Mexican politicians are almost unanimously pro-choice. Similarly with bilingual education: 80 percent of Mexican-Americans are against bilingual education if it means taking time away from learning English, but no Mexican-American

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public official opposes it. On affirmative action, although Latinos in general split about 50-50, only 2 percent of the Mexican-American delegates to the 1988 Democratic convention opposed affirmative action in *any* form.

California's Mexican leaders, Skerry shows, have bartered away their constituents' interests for the money that comes from the state's big Democratic machine. They can get away with this arrangement because the "legalistic quick fix" of the 1982 amendment to the Voting Rights Act provides for the redrawing of district lines to ensure "minority representation," making candidates less accountable to their constituents than to the state politicians who draw up their districts. Many such districts are "rotten boroughs," in which as few as a quarter of the adult residents are able to vote, due to the heavy number of undocumented immigrants. Candidates can thus be "parachuted" into racially gerrymandered districts they have no acquaintance with and, given their enormous financial backing and the disorganization and disempowerment of the populace, be almost guaranteed victory.

The combination of out-of-district funding, a powerful judiciary partial to race-based remedies, and the disparity between leadership and public opinion has bred a bizarre paradox: Mexican-American leaders, behind the scenes, now actively *oppose* efforts by grass-roots groups to register more Mexican-Americans to vote. What they prefer is the kind of protest politics perfected by the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), whereby activists employing threats of disruption and division pretend to act as brokers between a theoretically aggrieved and often nonexistent constituency and the larger society.

ALL this is a far cry from the original intent of the civil-rights movement. And, as Skerry points out, it is even more distant from the political world of turn-of-the-century immigrants. Earlier waves of immigrants benefited from "mediating institutions"—trade unions, churches, local newspapers—that linked private culture to public political values. While tutoring newcomers to adjust their aspirations to the mainstream, they could also bend the mainstream, however slightly, to the immigrants' interests. Today, in place of the unions and churches that once won representation for the disadvantaged, there are the universities, themselves bastions of affirmative action and multiculturalist ideology.

In the case of Mexican-Americans, Skerry writes, universities serve as engines not of assimilation but of de-assimilation. He cites students who have told him that they never considered themselves disadvantaged, or different in any way, until they arrived at college. Now, he writes, they are

> grappling not with *obstacles* to assimilation, but with its *consequences*. . . . Their sense of loss . . . gets transformed into a critique of American society sustained by two contradictory beliefs: first, that this is a racist society that won't permit Chicanos to assimilate; and second, that assimilation into the mainstream is an inexorable and insidious process that must be resisted at all costs.

Skerry makes it very clear that it is American institutions—the universities, the media, the courts, the civil-rights establishment—which are ultimately responsible for this political charade, and not Mexican immigrants themselves, the vast majority of whom want nothing more than to be given the chance to enter American society under their own steam. No wonder, then, that so many of today's Mexican-Americans feel ambivalent about their status in this country: as Skerry writes, that ambivalence is only a "rational response to the signals being sent by today's political institutions." In *Mexican Americans* he has laid down a most eloquent warning of what happens when racial politics become institutionalized in everyday life.

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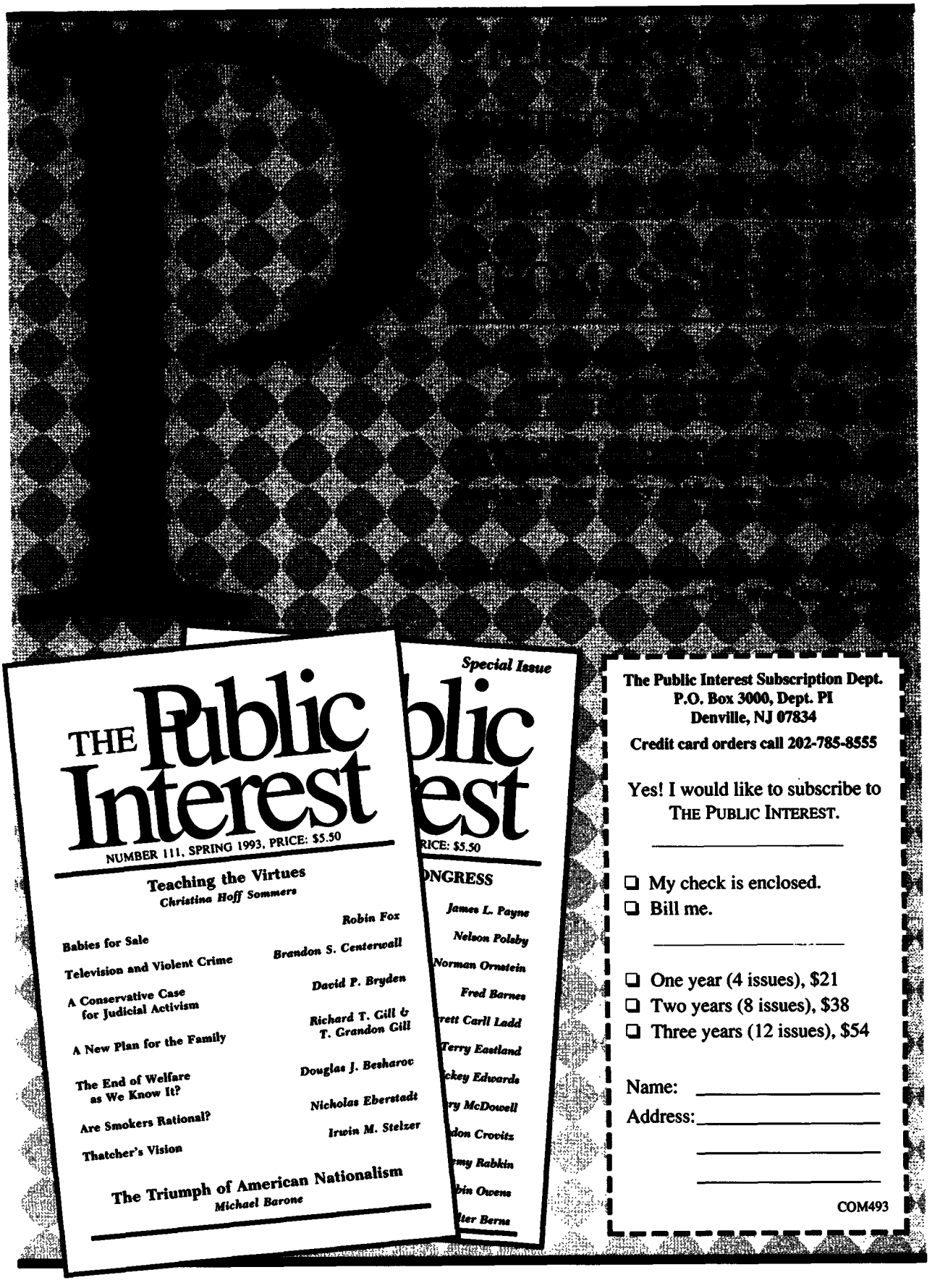

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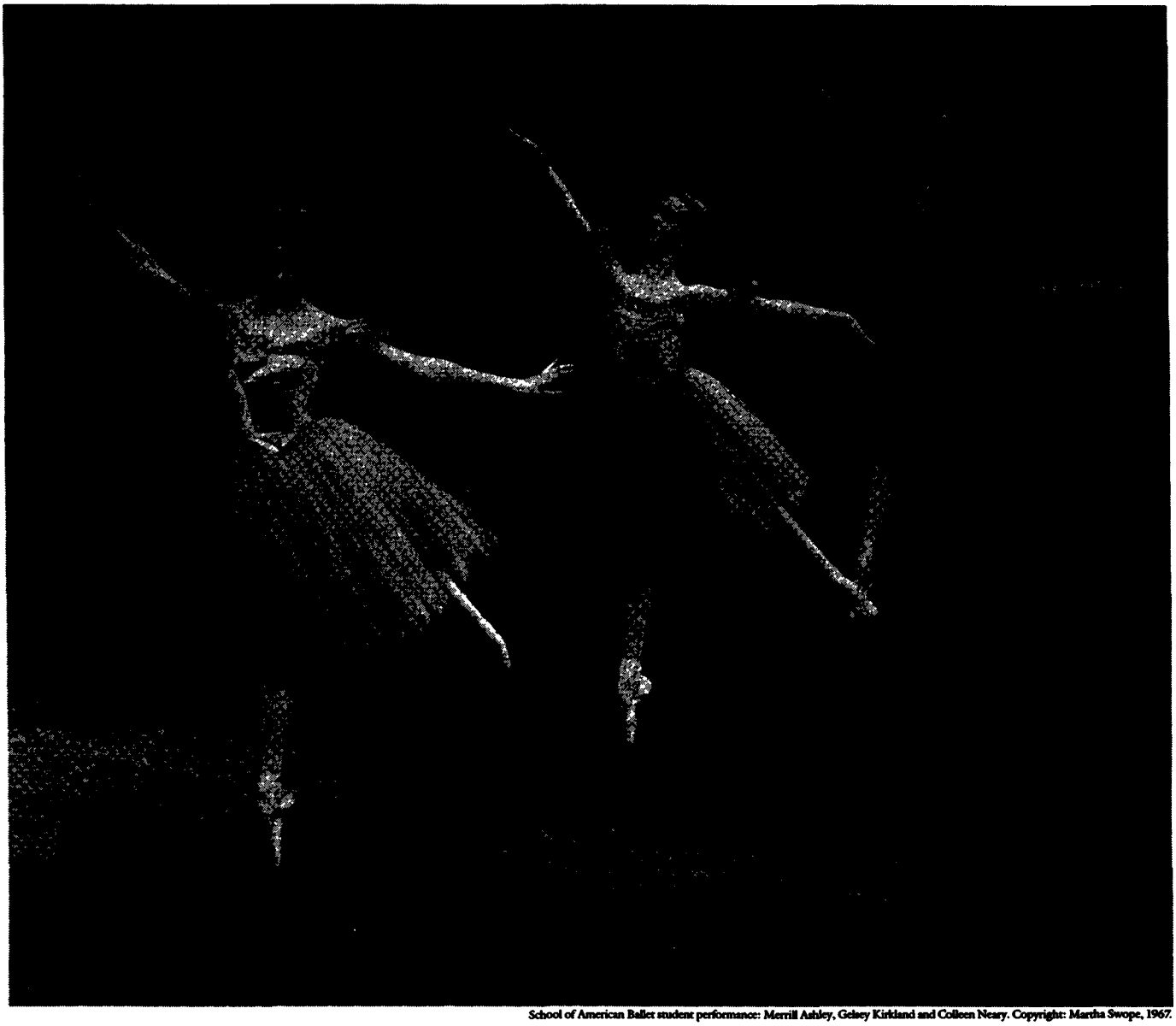

School of American Ballet student performance: Merrill Ashley, Gelsey Kirkland and Colleen Neary. Copyright: Martha Swope, 1967.

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